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TWELVE  
SERMONS

Preached on  
*Several Occasions.*

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B Y  
RICHARD LUCAS, D. D.  
Vicar of St. Stephen Coleman-street,  
And Prebendary of Westminster.

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TWELVE  
SERMONS



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The

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Unity and Peace Preserv'd  
by Communion with  
our CHURCH.

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Ephes. 4. Ver. 2, 3.

*With all Lowliness and Meekness,  
with Long-suffering, forbearing  
one another in Love.*

*Endeavouring to keep the Unity of  
the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

**W**HEN I hasten'd last day  
to a Conclusion of my  
former Subject, I did  
it with Design to Treat  
of the Great Mystery of our Religion,  
*Christ made manifest in the Flesh*, in this  
time of *Advent*; but contrary to my  
purpose, I am forc'd to turn the point  
of my Discourse another way, being by  
the present Transactions of Affairs Ne-  
cessarily and Unavoidably engag'd on  
a Subject very unpleasant to me, and to

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all Sober and well-affected Men, our present Divisions. You are not ignorant, I suppose, what Presentment the Church-wardens have been Oblig'd to make, and you know as well as I, what the Method of the Law is towards those who shall continue in their Separation from this Church. This, I know will raise a great Cry against the Government, but especially, the greatest share of Popular Odium and Invidious Reflection will light upon the Clergy. What are we to do in this Case? Shall we disobey the Lawful Commands of our Lawful Governours, to Humour a Discontented Party of the People? And to Humour them in that which we in our Consciences are perswaded is both hurtful to themselves, and Destructive to the Peace and Prosperity of the Government: This cannot be expected from us, because we cannot do it with a good Conscience towards God, or towards Man. All that I can possibly imagine to be in our Power, is both by Private and Publick Admonition to inform such of the error and danger of their ways, to exhort them to return to their Duty, and as much as lies in us, to perswade them *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the*

*the bond of Peace* : This I am willing to do as far as I am able in Private, and am now about to do in publick, though it is highly probable, that those whose good I chiefly design in it, may by their absenting themselves, make themselves incapable of this part of my Charity.

By the *Unity of the Spirit* here is meant that which we are wont to call the Unity of Charity and Affection; By *the Bond of Peace*, is meant Unity and Agreement in our external Societies, whether more publick, or more private, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil, but especially Ecclesiastical, as appears by the Context; for by this Peace, Preserved by Meekness and Long-suffering, *God is Glorified in the Church*; which is that *St. Paul* passionately desires, *Chap. 3. ver. ult.* And the enforcements of this Du-

ty, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* of this Chapter, (a) *(a) Clari-*  
*For there is one Body, &c.* do immedi-<sup>us expri-</sup>  
ately relate to Ecclesiastical Union. You<sup>mit quàm</sup>  
Observe here, <sup>perfecta</sup>  
<sup>esse debeat</sup>

1. That the Unity of the Spirit can-<sup>Unitas</sup>  
not be preserved but in the bond of <sup>Christia-</sup>  
Peace; that all Divisions in Externals, do <sup>norum,</sup>  
Naturally tend to dissolve the Unity of <sup>nempe quæ</sup>  
<sup>omni ex</sup>  
<sup>parte adeo</sup>  
*valeat ut in unum Corpus & unam animam coalescamus. Cal-*  
*vin, in hunc locum.*

Charity and Affection: and I think, were there no other Proof for Uniformity of a National Church in the New Testament, this were enough.

2. You may observe that it is the indispensable Duty of all the Members of the Church of Christ, to endeavour *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

How great the Importance of this Duty, how necessary and indispensable its obligation, no Man (I think) can be ignorant; unless he be a perfect Stranger to Christianity. Both may sufficiently appear from the verses following my Text. *There is one Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism; One God and Father of all; who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* In which words St. Paul does necessarily insinuate, that whoever, does not endeavour to keep *the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace*, does Act repugnant to the very nature of Christianity, and cuts himself off from that glorious and necessary Unity which he here explicates. This should make us amazed to think, that Men should set so light a Value upon our Peace and Unity;

nity; and upon such slight, trifling, dark and disputable pretences, throw off all obligations to this Duty; tho so clear, so important, so indispensable. I am Astonished to think that any Man professing Christianity, should be tender and scrupulous in things of an indifferent Nature, and yet Confident and Careless in the Violation of a Duty necessary and essential to the life and being of Christianity, and a Christian Church.

But it is not my Design at present to insist upon either of these two Observations, though of so great moment in themselves, and so fairly and naturally deducible from the Text, I have only brought you on thus far, that from hence, as from a rising ground, you may with more ease and advantage survey each part of my following Discourse, and I may more securely make my entrance into it, the main Design of which is this. To consider the Method by which we ought to preserve *the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, and to apply it to the present State of things.

The Method is laid down, *ver. 2. With all Lowliness and Meekness, with*



*Long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love.* Our present state is this : There are many and great Divisions amongst us ; the Government, as the best way to their Cure, or at least-wise, to give a stop and check to their growth, doth think fit that they should by Summons, by Instructions, and by several sorts of Admonition, be put in mind of their Error, invited, and required to amend it ; and probably such as persist willfully in their Division, will fall under Ecclesiastical Censure, which, besides the Spiritual disadvantages of it, is followed by considerable Evils Inflicted by the Civil Power.

That in this state of things I may discharge my self with that Charity that I truly have for those who have divided our Church, with that Obedience which I do out of Conscience owe the Government, and with that Duty and Vigilance I owe my Cure, I will take the Liberty to consider this Rule or Method of Unity.

1. With Respect to such who are Actually in the state of Division or Separation.

2. With Respect to the Government, and those who Act under it in this present Method.

3. With

3. With Respect to us our selves as private Persons, that so they who Err, may as far as lies in me, be inform'd, that the Government, and they who Act under it, may not lie under the Burden of Aspersions, or any undeserved Imputation : And that,

Lastly, We in our particular Conversations may know how to behave our selves towards our Dissenting Brethren.

1. Of this Rule, with Respect to those who are Actually in Separation from us.

I suppose we may take it for granted, that this Rule of Lowliness, and Meekness, and Forbearance in Love does as strongly Oblige the Subject and private Men towards their Governours, as it can the Magistrates and the Government towards their Inferiours and Subjects ; how well this Duty has been discharged by these Men, will appear from three Considerations.

1. Whether those grounds by which they pretend to justify themselves be a just and necessary Cause of Division.

2. Whether they have done all for the Nations and Churches Peace, which they themselves acknowledge they Lawfully may do.

3. On supposal, that their Pretences for Separation were both just and necessary, whether they have observed that Lowliness, and Meekness, and Forbearance, to which this Rule doth Oblige them, in the Forming, Propagating, and Defending their Separation.

1. Whether those grounds, &c.

You will easily be able to judge of this, if I can make it appear, that there is no just ground of Separation from our Church, either upon the Account of its Doctrine, Government, or Rites.

1. Not upon the Account of its Doctrine. The Articles of our Church are such, in which most of those that are divided from us do agree with us, excepting in those which relate to the Government of the Church, (of which in its place) whatever be our difference in this point, in any Article wherein they differ from us, they do therein as widely differ from one another. But suppose the People should not approve of every thing contain'd in our Book of Articles, what Necessity is there that they should? Are they bound to Declare their Assent to them by Oath or Subscription? Or are any of them ever excluded our Communion for Dissenting from

from these Articles in some one Opinion or other? What summary of Faith is there in any part of our Churches Liturgy, in which the People joyn in our Assemblies, besides the three Creeds? And I do not know any of them unless *Soci-nians* and *Quakers*, &c. which have renounc'd the Belief of these; if they have, we hope we shall be Pardoned by God and all the Reformed Churches, if we will not part with our Creed for the sake of Unity: In a word, so well do we agree in the points of Doctrine, that it has been of late Disputed with some heat, which kept closest to the sense of our Articles, the Clergy of the Church of *England*, or those of the Separation. We have no Anti-trinitarian Doctrines, which divided the Primitive Churches; we Teach no Infallibility, no Power of Indulgences, no Transubstantiation, no Adoration of Images, Invocation of Saints, &c. which gave Occasion, and that a just one, to the Modern Divisions of the Reformed and *Roman* Churches; we continue in the *Apostles* Doctrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and Prayer, Acts 2. 42. As to the *Credenda* we hold fast the form of sound words, 2 Tim 1. 13. And as to the *Agenda*,  
we



we Teach those things that become *sound Doctrine, giving unto Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are Gods.* We admit of nothing but Truth and Justice, Obedience and Charity, and will not allow of Equivocation or Perjury ; or in a word *the doing evil, that good may come thereof:* I think this is confess'd on all hands, and it is a matter of no small moment for it follows from hence,

1. That our Church is a true Church, for all of the Reformed Religion think nothing more Essentially necessary to a true Church than the Confession of the true Faith, and right Administration of the Sacraments; and both these, I think, our Dissenting Brethren will allow us, excepting Anabaptists, a Sect of no great Reputation through all Christendom for many Years together, as every one knows, who has so much History as to understand its Birth and Progress, and at this day Condemn'd with much bitterness by all other Professions of Christians.

2. It follows from hence that our Brethrens Separation from us is Condemn'd by all those who deny Separation Lawful from that Church, where the Word  
of

of God is truly Preach'd, and the Sacraments rightly Administred, who upon search may be found to be not only the Celebrated Authors of the Protestant Reformation, but the most Learned Divines of the Reformed Churches ever since.

3. It will from hence follow, that it is absurd, and almost contradictory for those who embrace our Doctrine, to charge us with Idolatrous and Superstitious Rites, since 'tis so unlikely, that I cannot tell whether I may affirm it an utter impossibility, that that Church should enjoin in its Constitution Superstition or Idolatry, which has no one Doctrine or Opinion favouring of either, but expressly many, nay, all necessary to impugn and overthrow both; for besides that, 'tis not likely that any Church should impose Rites repugnant to its own Doctrine and Principles: So that if any such were to be found amongst us, it were to be charg'd on the Personal Corruptions of Men, not the Frame and Constitution of our Church: Besides this, I say, 'twill puzzle a very subtile Schoolman to form a Notion of Superstition and Idolatry in Practice without a Superstitious or Idolatrous Opinion to Found it upon.

And

And thus, I think, I have sufficiently made it out, that the Doctrine of the Church of *England* is such, both as to Matters of Faith and Practice, as can give no just cause of Offence to any, unless *Socinians, Quakers, Anabaptists*, and such kind of Sects, which are not only Condemn'd by all the Reformed Churches as well as ours, but also judg'd a Scandal and Reproach to the Reformation it self: You have heard too partly, of what Consequence the right understanding of this Point, is but this will appear more clearly, whilst I shew you.

2. That there is nothing in our Ecclesiastical Government which can be a just ground of Separation and Non-Conformity.

I will not here go about to prove that our present Form of Government can lay the best claim to Apostolical Institution of any of those that are this day any where to be found in Christendom; for though I do believe this in my Conscience my self, yet I'll freely confess (though this be more, it may be, than some of better Abilities will Con me thanks for) that this Controversie has so much of Obscurity and Perplexity in it, that it is not easie to Convince such  
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## *The First Sermon.*

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of this, who are under any considerable prejudices against it: I'll therefore proceed another way, and will ask our Brethren, Do they believe, that as in Scripture Fundamentals of Faith are plain and evident, but less necessary Opinions are not? So in the Matter of Church-Government, the Essentials of it are expressly and clearly deliver'd and prescrib'd, but not all the Circumstantial of it? If they believe so, then they have not the least Reason to desert our Church upon the Account of its Polity; for there is nothing Essential to Ecclesiastical Government that is really wanting in ours: Has any form a true Ordination or Dedication of Men to the Service of God in his Church? We have much more; have they those who for the Edification of the Churches of Christ, Preach the Gospel, Administer the Sacraments? We as much, if not more: Have they any Method to preserve the Unity of the Churches of Christ, and to Propagate the Faith of Christ? (I doubt they have not, as might be easily made out from their own Records, and the Histories either of Presbytery or Independency; but if they have) I am sure we have much more: One thing I must confess  
we



we have not, I cannot say we want it, *i. e.* Lay-Elders, a device as new as Popular; but I pray, of what use are these? They can neither Preach nor Administer the Sacraments, nor is there sure any Pastoral Power of Discipline Originally in them; - and as for private Instruction and Admonition, I am very Ignorant if *St. Paul* does not in several places make that a part of the Pastoral Office of the Minister, sure he forgot that there was such a Constitution as that of Lay-Elders, in the Church of Christ; or which I rather believe he did not think any so fit for the discharge of this, as the Minister, being a Duty of the greatest Importance, and the greatest Difficulty: Have they a Discipline to restrain or cut off Offences? So have we: That it has not been exercised with strictness, is to be imputed in the greatest part to that tenderness which our Church ever had (and I hope will in a proper measure never want) for those who have Revolted from her, let not her Moderation become her Crime, forgive her this wrong. Thus we have then in our Constitution all that any Man can fancy to be Essentially necessary for the Government of the Church of Christ, and

and if the Essentials only of Government be clearly and expressly prescrib'd in Scripture, there can be no pretence for Separation founded here.

What then? Do they believe that Christ and his Apostles Instituted one Form of Church-Government expressly and clearly delivered in Scripture, not only as to Essentials, but all the Circumstantials of it? And that this Form is by the appointment of Christ of perpetual Obligation, and unalterable, absolutely necessary and Essential to the Being of a Christian Church? If they do not believe this, I would fain know why we may not Rationally allow our Governors as much Light and Prudence, and Spiritual Assistance too in the establishment of the Circumstantials of Ecclesiastical Polity, as to a few, and those fanciful and discontented Subjects? For such a Rise most Sects amongst us have had. Why 'tis not as fit that the Subjects should comply with the Laws of their Governours, as Governours with the Weaknesses and Fancies of their Subjects? But if they do believe there is any such Form thus evidently prescrib'd in all its Circumstantials, and Essentially necessary to the Being of a Church, then pray  
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be pleased without Prejudice, to consider what will follow from hence.

1. Judge if the Established Government has not a reason to be apprehensive of the designs and practices of Men of this Opinion, who judge not only ours, but all other Church Governments besides their own, Anti-Christian, or which is all one, Anti-Scriptural, and utterly repugnant to the Word of God, and are so far from being able to submit to any such, that they are oblig'd in Conscience, as they value the glory of God and the good of Souls, to endeavour the overthrow of any such Government, and the Establishment of their own, as that which Christ expressly requires.

2. If they believe this, then judge you whether their Clergy are not obliged to disabuse and undeceive their people, and to tell 'em plainly that Rites and Ceremonies are but the Pretences of Separation, that if we should quit at their request all these, it could give 'em no satisfaction till their Form of Government so expressly requir'd by Christ and absolutely necessary to the Being of a Church be set up; I am sure, if we have thought otherwise 'tis very fit we should be undeceiv'd and should know that this  
is

is the true state of the Controversy between us and men of this Opinion, whether the Government now Establish'd shall continue, or whether theirs shall be erected on the ruins of it; and from the same ground 'tis easy for us to guess what sort of Toleration or Comprehension they (if they should prevail) could with a good Conscience afford to us, how far they could with a good Conscience connive at a Form of Church Government Anti-Christian and Repugnant to the Word of God.

3. All who are of this Opinion do utterly unchurch and condemn, not only ours, but all other Churches in Christendom besides their own.

And thus I think this Controversie about the Form of Ecclesiastical Government is reduc'd to a very narrow compass; for if any man will hold that there is one only Form expressly requir'd both in Essentials and Circumstantials as absolutely necessary to the Being of a Church, you see what Unanswerable difficulties, and Unaccountable absurdities and inconveniencies this Opinion is clog'd with, and how Unreasonable it were that any Establish'd Government should give any Countenance to Men of

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such

such a persuasion ; but if they believe that the Essentials or Fundamentals only of Church Government are plainly deliver'd, and expressly prescribed, and that such only are necessary and immutable, the Circumstantials in each Church being left to the prudence of Men conducting themselves by the General Rules of Scripture, then it is easily apparent that our Ecclesiastical Constitution wants no such Essentials, and that none can be more fit to fix and determine the Circumstantials of this Government than those whom God has appointed Governours in this Church, this being the command of the Apostle, *Obey those that are set over you in the Lord. Heb. 13. 17.* and now I'll leave any honest and sober Man to try whether he can by Fancy or Surmise, as much as guesses at a shadow of reason to justify a separation from our Church on the Account of its Government.

3. I come now to the third Thing, the only thing remaining from whence any pretences for Separation can be rais'd, that is our Rites and Ceremonies.

I will not here enter into a particular discussion of our Brethrens Arguments and Objections against each of our few  
and

and harmless Rites and Ceremonies, but I will beseech all to consider,

1. That there cannot so much as an *Idea* or notion of a Church possibly be fram'd without some Rites and Ceremonies to be admitted in it.

2. That for these we have no particular and definitive Rule in Scripture, which is a truth that will be evident as long as there are any general Rules relating to this matter, to be found in the New Testament, such as, *Let all things be done to edification*, 1 Cor 14. v. 26. And, *Let all things be done decently and in order*, verse 40. for I think it will be next to an impossibility to find out any sense or use in general Rules, relating to this matter, if all particulars were fix'd and determin'd accordingly.

3. As no Churches are without their Rites and Ceremonies, so every Church, does take upon it self, to fix and determine these, and indeed not only those of the *Ausburgh* Confession, but *Calvin*, and all those who have followed that way of Reformation, nay *Andrew Melvil* himself in his Platform of Presbytery for the Church of *Scotland*, expressly declares that it belongs to the Church to determine all matters relating to the



πρέπον, or decency and order in Circumstantials of Divine Worship. The Assemblies Directory it self could find no other foundation for the fixing and determining such things, but humane prudence, and by this they mean, no doubt on't, that of the Governours of the Church; and indeed it is stark Nonsense to think otherwise, for if there must be Rites and Ceremonies, as to the Circumstantials of Religion, and these be not particularly determin'd, but left to general Rules, who can in common sense be thought fit to determine this matter, but the Governours in each Church? Thus far therefore I think I have advanc'd with great clearness, that no rational Man can find fault with our Church, either that we have Rites and Ceremonies, or that they are determin'd by the Governours of the Church. All that can be therefore possibly fanfy'd blameable, must be the Nature of our Ceremonies, and here tho I confess, my reason cannot comprehend why they who are impowr'd to determine the Circumstantials of Religion, should not be the fittest Judges of the tendency of such Circumstantials to Decency, and Order, and Edification, yet for this time  
I am

I am content that neither we nor they should be Judges in this matter, but we will refer our selves and our controversie, to those who have been the great Authors, and defenders of the Reformation. Dr. *Durell* who was eight years a Minister in the Reformed Church in *France* has writ a Treatise, concerning the Judgment and Practice of all the Reformed Churches in this point of Ceremony, wherein their consent to, and approbation of our Church in this Matter does unanimously appear, he could not be subject to Ignorance in this Controversie, the Reader may easily see whether he were under any prejudice or no, but if any exception could lie against him, I would easily appeal to the Body and System of Confessions and the Liturgies of all the Reformed Churches of Christendom; to be short, whoever will search honestly into this matter, will find there are two things only for which Rites and Ceremonies can be deservedly condemn'd.

1. If they be Idolatrous or Superstitious; or,

2. If they be Burthensom for their number. There is manifestly no ground of Quarrel with our Church on this last

Account. As to the former charge, I think we have nothing amongst us that any Man of common sense and modesty can suspect to be an Image or Idol, and how Idolatry can be suppos'd without Either Idol or Image, is next to an Impossibility to conceive; and as for Superstition, 'tis seated primarily in the mind of Man, and depends upon that opinion which is the ground and foundation of the institution, or observance of the Rite and Ceremony. Now what opinions particular Men may have, I know not, but if any Man can shew me that the Constitution of our Church has receiv'd into it, any opinion that has the least Tincture or Relish of Superstition, if it builds the Injunction or use of its few Ceremonies upon any other Foundation, than the general Rules of *St. Paul* that they tend to Decency, Order and Edification, I will for my part most readily subscribe to the Abrogation or Abolition of any thing which has the face or shadow of a Ceremony amongst us.

By this time it's easie for any unprejudic'd and sincere Hearer to judge what grounds our Church has given our Dissenting Brethren of a Separation, so fatal, not to the honour only, but I may almost

almost say, to the Being of our Church and State too, what is it they find fault with? Is it the Doctrine of our Church? No; for this they contend with us, which of us have the greater esteem and veneration for it; or if they should differ in any one Article of our Confession, I know not any Canon that does exact Oath or Subscription to our Book of Articles, from the People, and in our Publick service, they joyn with us in no other confession than that of the Apostles Creed, together with those two expositions of it, the *Nicene* and *Athanasian*, universally reverenc'd and receiv'd. Do they find fault with the Government of our Church? I desire that they would shew us what essential part of Church Government is wanting in ours, if they think every Circumstantial of Church Government clearly prescribed in Scripture, and every such absolutely necessary to the Being of a Church, and perpetual and immutable: When I shall see this made out I believe I shall be able to prove that our Government may lay as good a Claim to such an Institution as any other whatever, and till then I desire they would consider the notorious inconveniences, such an opinion is clog'd with,



none of the least of which is this (not mentioned before) that as often as we shall find in any Church, some Circumstance or other of Government, not clearly made out to us by holy Text, so often shall we be unavoidably tempted by this Principle to make a Separation from it ; and how often this is like to happen, I leave to the reason of every Man, but indifferently read in Scripture, and to the experience of all Men to Judge.

Do they lastly find fault with our Ceremonies ? let them shew us that the Church has no Power of instituting any, or that ours are burthensom for their number, or such in their Nature, as necessarily involve Men in the guilt of Superstition or Idolatry, which they will be able to do, when they shew us the Idol we adore, or that Superstitious Opinion in the Confession of our Church on which such a Superstitious Rite is founded ; if nothing of this kind can be prov'd it will be found that our Brethren have been so far from Lowliness, and Meekness, from Long-suffering and Forbearance, that they have broken the Peace and Unity of the Church, without any just grounds at all. And yet tho

tho they should be able to prove some one thing or other of this kind, yet neither would this be sufficient for their separation; for tho they cannot peradventure do all we think them bound to do, yet there is much that they can do for the sake of Peace and Unity, which till they have done, they will be found guilty of Transgressing this Rule of St. Paul. I come therefore, to consider,

2. Whether our Brethren of the Separation have done all which they themselves acknowledge they Lawfully may do for preserving *the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

As much as in you lies (saith St. Paul, *Heb. 12. 14.*) follow Peace with all Men. and St. James tells us, *The Wisdom which is from above is first Pure, then Peaceable,* James 3. 17. These and such like places do certainly import two things.

1. That it behoves every Man to do all that Lawfully he can do for the sake of Unity and Peace.

2. That he that does otherwise, is not led by the Spirit of God, which is a Spirit of Peace. 'Tis therefore with great Reason that we expect from Men that they should do all that lies in them for the

the Nation's and the Church's Peace : I will therefore demand,

I. Is it not Lawful e're a Subject renounces his Obedience to Established Laws, or a Christian leaves the Communion of an Establish'd Church, to Consider, Examine, and Weigh upon what grounds he proceeds to Act thus? This I suppose is so far from being Unlawfull, that it is absolutely Necessary for every Man that will preserve a good Conscience. But alas! how many hundreds are there in an Actual Separation from our Church, who are so far from having Examined, or Weighed either the Constitution of our Church, which they forsake, or of that which they betake themselves to, that they do not at this day understand either ; and what is worse, have never endeavoured it. How many hundreds are there in Actual Separation from us upon a pretended dislike of our Rites, who have never Considered or Examined the Nature of things indifferent, or of Christian Liberty, or of the Power of every particular Church in Establishing the Circumstantials of Divine Worship : Nay, that do no more understand either at this day, than I do the Laws and Interests of the most Remote and unknown

known Kingdom upon Earth. How many hundreds are there who have left our Communion upon dislike of Personal Errors and Corruptions, which our Church Condemns as much as they do, or upon Admiration of some Men's Persons or Abilities, which St. *Paul* himself Condemns. Now, 'tis manifest that such as these are so far from Acting upon just and proper Principles, that they Act upon none at all ; their Division from us can be imputed only to Fancy or Rashness, and Inconsiderateness, or what is worse. Such as these certainly can never be said to have done all that they Lawfully can do for the sake of Peace and Unity. Nor can such a Method of proceeding be ever justified, unless it can be made appear, that it is a Matter left purely to our Liberty and Choice, what Communion we will be of ; which can never be till Obedience and Disobedience, Schism and Unity become things indifferent.

Now, the Number of these is so great, as I believe every understanding Man that hears me this day, well knows that if all these should return to that Duty which they owe the Government and the Church, I do not question but that  
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Conventicles would be so thin, that there would need no Laws to dissolve them. I think therefore, I may very reasonably require and charge the multitude, who are rashly, ignorantly and inconsiderately engaged in Separation, that they return to the Unity of the Church, as they will Answer for all the dismal Effects of our Divisions at the Dreadfull Day of Judgment.

2. I demand, whether every Man in a Difference of this Nature ought not to be of a Meek and Teachable Temper, ought not to be willing and desirous to be Inform'd?

This I am sure is so far again from being unlawful, that it is every Man's Duty; and yet I am afraid, that all who have Travelled to reduce others to a right understanding have just Reason to complain, that they have found it a far more difficult Task to encounter the Passions and Prejudices than the Reasons of such Men. Alas, how common is it that Men resist and shun all means and attempts of their Information! How often is it that Men are enraged and provoked, not Instructed or Inform'd by the most Convincing Truth, deliver'd with Meekness and Integrity! Nay, such  
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is very commonly the carriage of some, that it requires not only a clear Understanding, but approved Courage also in any Man who will take upon him to examine and baffle Popular Errors, though with all the softness and gentleness imaginable. I am unwilling to enlarge farther, but I conjure all that hear me this day, if concern'd in the Subject I am Discoursing of, as they value their Souls, that they do endeavour hereafter to possess themselves with that Meekness and Lowliness of Mind, which become all those who pretend to a sincere Love of the Truth, which become all those who Love the Peace of *Sion*: For I am more than abundantly satisfied in my self, that it is more than one half of your Information, to be willing to be Inform'd; and that 'tis not so much the removal of Mens Errors, as of their Passions and Prejudices, which is Necessary to the closing our Divisions and Breaches. How Reasonable is it for me to require this Temper in all those who would have us believe that they Act with a good Conscience? Common Gratitude, and Humanity, the Love of their Country, and the Love of their God does indispensably call for this Frame and disposition of Spirit from  
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them: How can they see those Blots and Reproaches with which their manifold Divisions have stain'd the Beauty and Lustre of the Church of Christ, without that Sorrow and Melancholy which becomes every Christian that is truly Zealous for the Honour of God? How can they look upon those fresh and bleeding Wounds which their Separation has given to their dear Native Country, without a bleeding Heart? How can they see that Government, under which they enjoy so many Blessings, thus torn and shaken, without a very sensible tenderness and affliction for it? Were they but thus Affected, they would be so far from being froward or wilful, from shunning the means of Information through Wantonness or Obstinacy, that they would refuse no Toil, no Cost for the sake of it; that they would kiss the Feet of those that could bring the glad Tidings of Peace, that could offer them any Light or Instruction which might restore them at once to the Unity of the Church, and the Peace of their own Conscience, and so atchieve that Blessed Work of removing their Scruples, and their, and our Calamities together.

Having

Having thus in two Questions premised in general what were Reasonable to expect from every Man in the Separation.

1. That whoever is Actually Separated without seriously weighing, or rightly understanding what the just proper grounds of Separation are, should return to the Unity of the Church.

2. That every Man ought to be possessed with such a Meek, Lowly and Teachable Temper, as may render him capable and desirous of Information. I come now to consider the Point a little more closely and particularly.

You will not hold Communion with us. Why? Because there are Corruptions in our Church, though I know not what they be, I will for this time suppose so; Will ye then hold Communion with no Church but what is utterly free from all Corruptions and Errors? How unpracticable a Principle is this? What Instances can we find of Churches Constituted even in Apostolical and Primitive Times, who were utterly exempt from all Errors and Corruption? Examine the Scripture, consider the Churches at *Jerusalem*, at *Antioch*, at *Rome*, at *Corinth*, and all those of *Asia*, and see whether even



even in the Apostles times there were not manifest Errors crept in? It is easie to judge, how inconsistent a Principle, this is, if we consider the unavoidable frailties of Humane Nature, from which Governours are not utterly exempt, much less private Men: Or if we consider, that the Interests of the World do almost necessarily and unavoidable mix themselves with the Affairs of Religion, as far as concerns Circumstantials in Church-Government: And this I think were no hard Task for me to shew by a particular Survey of the Constitution and Government of most, if not all the Reformed Churches this day in Christendom. Nor was this Truth ever more apparently discernable than in Presbytery and Independency in this Kingdom, when they had the Assistance of the then prevailing secular Power.

2. Consider, how Fatal as well as Impracticable a principle this is? For this pretence of seeking for a pure Church, void of Spot or Wrinkle, has carried Men through a Succession or descent of Sects, and left them at last in the Dreggs and Lees of all Sects, Quakers, Ranters and Atheists. That we may therefore

fore be safe in the Communion of any Church it will be sufficient,

1. That the Errors and Corruptions in it be not such as are Repugnant to the Fundamentals of Faith, the Essentials of Government, and the Rule of good Life.

2. If the Errors or Corruptions be of an inferiour Nature, it will be abundantly enough to secure us in the Communion of that Church, if we can Communicate with that Church, without Communicating with its Errors; without being compelled to declare our assent to any thing, we reckon a falsehood, or practising any thing we account a Corruption. As to the

1. I think no Man at this time of day charges our Church with any Error Contradictory to Fundamentals, or destructive of good manners, As to the

2. Supposing our Errors of an inferiour Nature, let us consider how far the People may Communicate with us, without Communicating in these Errors; suppose there were an Error in some Circumstantials of our Government, what evil Effect can that have upon the People in our Communion? Can the Word Preached become ineffectual, or

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the Sacraments of our Church Unhal-  
lowed? because that Man, who Prea-  
ches the one, or Administers the other,  
is not ordain'd by a College of meer  
Presbyters; what if our Church Disci-  
pline be not executed with strictness?  
This may be a personal Error at any  
time in the Governours, but not in the  
Constitution of our Church; this kind  
of Liberty may be indeed very Mischie-  
vous to the Vicious, but the good are  
both a Law and Discipline to themselves.  
'Tis true it may be both a trouble and  
offence to sincere Christians, that the  
Loose and Wicked are not restrain'd and  
punish'd, but I cannot possibly see, how  
the sin of another can Wound or Defile  
my Conscience; or how a good Man  
becomes Guilty by living in the Neigh-  
bour-hood or Family of a bad one.  
You know that in the twelve Disciples  
there was one Devil. *John 6. 70.* That  
our Saviour has expressly liken'd the  
Church or Kingdom of God to a Net  
that enclosed both the good and bad  
Fish. *Matth. 13. 47.* To a Field where-  
in the Wheat and the Tares grew up to-  
gether, and were not to be separated  
till the harvest, *i. e.* till the final Judg-  
ment, *v. 25.* I do not urge these places  
for

for a toleration of Loose and Wicked Men in our Church or any other, he that thinks we have need of such a defence is utterly ignorant of the Constitution and sense of our Church. We admit indeed all sorts to the hearing the Word; and we should cross the design of our Saviour if we did otherwise, who came to call Sinners, not the Righteous to Repentance, but we reject all from the Sacrament who can be manifestly convicted of any thing that does incapacitate them for it: Let any Man read our Rubrick and Canons relating to this Matter beginning at the 109, and if he be not obstinately prejudic'd he will confess that our Church is so far from approving Vice or Impiety in its members, that it has taken all the care that can reasonably be desir'd to purge our Communion of all things that might give any Scandal or Offence. So then they that dislike the Government of our Church, may Lawfully join in our Assemblies, since they can Communicate in the one without Communicating at all in the Errors of the other.

Let us come now to Rites and Ceremonies. Why should these keep People from joyning with us in our Publick



Assemblies ? I know not what Influence the Cross in Baptism, or the Ring in Marriage can possibly have upon our hearing the Word, receiving the Sacraments, or joyning in our Publick Prayers, since we do not in either of these declare the least Assent to, or Approbation of these Rites. As to the Surplis, I cannot possibly imagine what there can be in it more than in a Gown, Cloak, or Cassock; it may not, peradventure, agree with the Fancy of every beholder, but I cannot imagine why it should disturb any Man's Conscience, unless the wearers.

There is but one thing, if you call it a Rite or Ceremony, in which they that join with us in a thorow-Communion, are expected to Conform, which is Kneeling in the Receiving the Sacrament: A Posture so Natural and Suitable, that I have Observed, that those whom I have seen Receive with many Tears, and much Devotion, do seem to think it scarce low enough, and are more Naturally inclin'd to bow down, or fall flat upon the Earth, than to stand or sit. And indeed when we consider what the Motions of the Soul of a Devout Communicant are, that it is humbled under

its Reflections upon its many and great Sins, that it is swallowed up with the sense of Gods Love in Christ, that it is offering up, and Devoting it self to God, and does earnestly implore his Aid and Assistance for the time to come with a Holy Fear and Reverence: What Posture can more properly become a Man, performing so many Acts of Divine Worship, than Kneeling? And he that can fantasie that these great Acts of Religious Worship will be rejected by God, because perform'd by a Devout Communicant upon his Knees, and not sitting, must entertain a more Blind and Superstitious Notion of God, than ever Jew or Gentile had.

And that this Circumstantial might not be mistaken, our Church has explain'd it self concerning this Injunction at the End of the Communion-Service, declaring expressly that they do not hereby design any Reverence or Worship to the Elements of Bread and Wine: And I dare say, if you should ask any one Communicant of our Church, whether they did intend any such thing? They would easily tell you, that it is the farthest thing in the World from their thoughts. And to be short, I do not

question but that if this were all that kept Men from our Communion, the Moderation and Goodness of our Church would have found long ago an easie Expedient to heal this Difference.

The sum of all, is this: If Men may join with us in our Communion without being Guilty of any thing they scruple in it, so far I think every Man that Labours after Peace, is bound to joyn; for it cannot be otherwise conceived how such can be said to do their utmost for the sake of Unity and Peace, since they leave much undone, which they Lawfully may do. But you will say, Would not our Communion in the Publick Congregation Countenance all those things we scruple? I Answer, No: For no Man in any Communion is answerable for any thing more, or thought to approve any thing else than what that Church requires of him as the Condition of Communion. This is apparently the sense of our Church; for if they thought that the joyning in Publick Communion did necessarily imply an Approbation of every particular in its Frame and Constitution, I cannot see any Necessity of Obliging the Clergy to Subscription or exprels Declaration of

of Assent and Consent, &c. And accordingly

This has been the Practice of Christians in all Ages. *Polycarp* and *Anicetus* did joyn together in Communion, though they could not agree together in the Controversie about Easter. The *Catholicks* and *Novatians* did joyn together to Oppose the *Arrians*, and yet they were not hereby supposed to agree together in the Doctrines of *Novatus*. And in a Synod at *Sandomiria*, several Protestant Churches very much differing in their Forms, and Rites, and Ceremonies, did yet unanimously agree to joyn together in one Communion, as often as they should be Conven'd together. The Result of all this Argument is therefore plainly this: That whatever Errors of less moment may be in a Church, no Man becomes guilty of them by being of that Communion, unless they be such as he is bound to Profess or Practise e're he can be admitted into, or continue in that Communion. The Consequence of which, is this, that our Brethren are bound to joyn with us in all those parts of Communion, wherein there are none of those Ceremonies which they scruple at: And if they



would but thus go as far as they can, we should have good Reason to hope that they might be by degrees won over to an entire Conformity, or that the Government would Naturally be kind and gentle to Men of such a Christian and Peaceable Behaviour: If we could but obtain from them that they would frequent that part of the Publick Service which begins when our Liturgy is ended; if they would but come to our Sermons without Prejudice, and with a sincere desire of knowing the Truth, we should have no Reason to despair either of Peace or Uniformity. This I have said upon a supposal that some Men do really stumble at some things amongst us. But what shall I say to another sort of Men, who do when Occasion requires, joyn with us in all parts of our Publick Communion, and yet cannot be perswaded to hold a constant Communion with us?

What they think they Lawfully may do, is easy to be guessed by what they Actually do; when they see it necessary they can Lawfully joyn with us in all parts of our Communion, and I do not find that the best of their Clergy have condemn'd this Practice, and therefore I

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am in Charity bound to think that, what they do, they do with a good Conscience. If so, it will puzzle any man of an upright heart and moderate Capacity, to Comprehend how Communion with, and Separation from our Church (both Church and Persons continuing still the same) can consist with a good Conscience. I believe most Divines abroad do think this very little short of a Contradiction: and when they hear that there are Men, who sometimes plead Conscience for Disobedience to that Law, which at other times they can with a good Conscience Comply with, they will be apt to think that there is more of Humour and Design in this than Conscience. In this case I would ask,

1. What is it which makes our Communion in it self and to them Lawful for this day, and if needs be this year, become for ever after Unlawful? all that can be said is, that there are some accidental alterations in this case, that there are some Conveniencies or Inconveniencies which renders our Communion to day Lawful, and this day Twelvemonth Unlawful: These must not be outward or temporal, for these cannot vary the Nature of Church Communion, unless a  
Man

Man will vilely prostitute his Conscience; it remains therefore, that there must be some inward and Spiritual inconveniency that makes constant Communion Unlawfull, what this can be besides that pretence of Better Edification, cannot I think, be as much as fancies. And then Observe,

1. Into what a narrow point our Controversy is Reduced, mark how all the pretences for separation are vanished: Our Church Government, the Doctrine, the Liturgy, the Rites and Ceremonies are all acknowledged by them Lawful, for I desire to know, do they by this occasional Communion with us declare their Approbation of all these particulars in our Church? If they do not, then it is apparent that they do not Judge themselves involv'd in the guilt of any thing they dislike in our Church by Communicating with us, and consequently they do publickly own that nothing they find fault with in it can be a just ground for Separation; if they do, then it is apparent that all controversies about any thing of this kind are at an end, and must ever be so. For all these which they approve in their Occasional Communion will be no other, if they hold constant

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Communion with us. All therefore that is left for justification of these dreadful Divisions is only pretence of better Edification.

2. Observe that this pretence will at any time serve the turn to justify a Separation, not only from ours, but from any Church in Christendom, and can never be admitted to be of any Weight or Force, till it be made appear that Unity or Schism, Obedience or Disobedience are things indifferent, and that it is not a pin matter, whether a Man be of the Establish'd Church, or Presbyterian, or Independent, or Anabaptist, or Socinian, or Quaker, for this pretence of better Edification, considering the different Dispositions of People, and the different Abilities of the Ministers, will be laid claim to with as much heat by each of them as by any of the rest.

3. Observe that though this may have something of a face of a Plea for the Communion of one Day, yet it has none for the Communion of a Year; for to Live destitute of the Publick Means of Edification for a Year together, seems to be a kind of Compliance not over-Christian, nor very safe. But if in this time they hold Communion with both Churches



ches without prejudice to Edification, I cannot possibly conceive why they should at any time afterwards break off their Communion with us, since the least they are bound to do for the sake of Unity and Peace, is certainly what they find by Experience they can do, not only Lawfully, but without any Prejudice to their Souls. Thus empty is this Pretence, if true; but what if it be not true? It were very strange if all the Preachers of distinct and separate Congregations should be Edifying Men, and none of ours so: Blessed be God, we may say it without Vanity, that we can behold in our Church as manifest Proofs of the Power of God in his Ordinances, as in any other whatsoever; those of our Church who give a Regular and Conscientious Attendance to the Word, the Prayers, and Sacraments of the Church, being generally as Eminent Examples of Substantial Goodness and Religion truly Christian, as are any where to be found. Nor indeed can any Reason be Imagined, why the Spirit of God should be judged to have forsaken our Assemblies, since we Preach the same Gospel, Press the same Truths, Administer the same Sacraments, and Offer up the same Petitions and Praises to  
God,

God, and that I hope with integrity of Heart, to which Christ has promised the Aids and Assistances of his Spirit. And therefore 'tis to be fear'd that the Edification which cannot be promoted in such a Communion is not derived from the Spirit and Gospel of Christ, but depends upon some Personal abilities, acquired forms, or the Inventions and Passions of Men.

2. I desire to know, if they cannot Communicate with us constantly, why do they not as frequently as they can? And how shall we be able to determine, how frequent this their Occasional Communion may be? Or what limits they will in this point prescribe to the frequency of their Occasional Communion.

3. Since they can hold Communion with us on Occasion, I would beg them to declare, what the Kind and Nature of these Occasions are which justify this Communion. For then I should not question but I should be able to shew that these Occasions or some as Urgent and Weighty, do so frequently occur, that if they would Act consonant to their own Principle, they would soon turn their Occasional

casional into a constant Communion. Mark what I say, I would fain know what those Occasions are that do justify Occasional Communion with us: and if I do not prove as Necessary, nay more Important Occasions always standing and in Force, I'll be content to be of their Communion. The Thread of my Discourse doth now Naturally lead me to enquire,

3. Whether our Brethren have observed this Rule of *St. Paul* in forming, propagating and defending their Separation, upon supposal that the grounds of it were both just and necessary? But being well assured that an Historical account of the Rise and Progress of Separation amongst us would look like an Invective. I have upon second thoughts purposely declin'd it, being unwilling to Exasperate those minds which I travail only to inform.

From this discourse it appears, what our brethren may do for peace: How far they may go (if they please) towards the healing of those wounds which endanger both our Church and State. If they please, Blessed God! How can it but please Christians to restore as much as lies in them Unity to thy Church, and  
Peace

Peace to that Government under which thou hast placed them? How can Dissensions, Distractions, Ruins please any soul that is inspir'd by thy meek, peaceful and gentle Spirit? O my brethren, will ye call your selves Christians, whose Livery or Distinguishing Character is Love? And will ye do nothing for peace and Unity? If you are the Disciples of Christ you ought to Sacrifice your Estates, your Worldly reputations, nay your lives themselves, all but a good Conscience for Unity and Peace; O be but Content to Sacrifice your humours for it! O be but persuaded to do what you can for Peace without any prejudice to your Credit or Fortune or Conscience, nay with infinite advantage to Each! What would you have us do, when you your selves are thus wanting to your selves? We desire, we travail, we pray for your Peace, and as becomes brethren, we suffer in your afflictions when ever you force it upon your selves: 'Tis our grief and trouble when ever we are obliged to be the Instruments of any thing that causes yours: but what would you have us do? How unreasonable were it for you to expect (and impossible for us to comply with such an expectation) that  
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we should break the Laws, falsify our trust, and desert that Duty we owe to God and Man, in compliance to your fancies! When you your selves in the mean time refuse to do, what 'tis manifestly apparent you Lawfully may do in compliance with the Laws, and for the sake of Peace and Unity in Church and State.

And now I must call God and my own Conscience to Witness, that I have discharged my self with all imaginable Integrity, I lie not under any Provocations on one hand, or Obligation on the other, which might pervert my Judgment, and in this condition you will easily judge me exempt from the Temptation of Interest or Ambition; I have delivered the truth with plainness, and I have watched over my self that I might not mix any frailties with it which might render it Distastful, tho I think the Charity which (I am not ashamed to own) I have for my mistaken Brethren, would of it self have kept me easily from any Bitterness or sharp reflections. I Pray God those that are concern'd may lay to Heart these truths with the same Calmness and Integrity, I have delivered them; I should not  
then

then question, but that they would contribute something to our Peace and Unity, which is the Earnest Prayer and Desire of my Soul, and shall be the Travail of my Life. Now to God be Glory and Honour and Dominion for Ever.

*Amen.*

When I had proceeded thus far in the two preceeding discourses, I was obliged by the Approach of the *Christmas* Solemnity to quit this Subject; and indeed I could not conceive it necessary for me to spend much time on the Consideration of this Rule of *St. Paul* with respect to the Government which was the second general proposed; since, if what I have said before was clear and convictive as I hoped it was, nothing could better justify the present procedure of the Government: For if this Separation be utterly groundless, the Government cannot reasonably be taxed for endeavouring the suppressing of it by legal methods.

As to the Method of Excommunication, there is nothing in it which may not appear consonant to the Light of Nature, as well as Scripture, nothing being more reasonable than to exclude those Men from the advantages of our

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Society whose principles and actions are repugnant not only to the prosperity but the very Being of this Society. As to those Civil Effects which in our Law attend Excommunication, they are no other than what may be sufficiently warranted by the Judgment and Practice of those Churches to which our brethren have declared themselves much devoted. So then there is nothing in this point of our Church discipline blameable in its Constitution, and I do not question but that the Execution of it will be carried on with that temper which is almost peculiar to the Church of *England*, and shews it as remote from the Spirit of Persecution as from that of Disloyalty; a temper of which they themselves who most accuse her are the most pregnant proof, the Numbers and Wealth of those of the Separation to which I must take leave to add their Confidence, being the most undeniable argument of the Indulgence, and Kindness of that Government under which they have grown up to this height.

It remains only that I put you in mind here of practising this Rule of *St. Paul* in your Private Conversation. And

I. Give

I. Give me leave to direct you who are of our own Communion ; that nothing do's better become a Disciple of Christ, than Charity, Meekness, Long-suffering towards our Dissenting Brethren. In this sort of behaviour we shall be sure that we shall not gratifie our Carnal passions, we shall be most likely to win upon our Brethren, and we shall advance the Credit and Reputation of our Church, nothing being a clearer proof of the Spirit of God in it, than Meekness and Charity in the Members of it.

Let us therefore lay aside all Strife and Bitterness and Reproach in our Conversation, nay what is more, let us not suffer our selves to be provoked or affronted into any Word or Action towards our brethren that may misbecome kind Neighbours or good Christians.

But yet one thing I must put you in mind of, that we must so preserve our Christian Charity, as also to preserve that which do's necessarily become every good Christian, our Loyalty: our Meekness and Lowliness must not betray us into any thing that is undutiful or unjust towards that Government we



live happily under ; we must at the same time be Zealous for this, whilst we are Charitable and long suffering towards them.

Give me leave in the second place to mind you who are not of our Communion, that as nothing can better become those who pretend to a greater Purity in your Constitution, than a more eminent degree of Meekness and Lowliness, so nothing can so clear the Sincerity of your intentions, as the gentleness and peaceableness of your whole Conversation. This alone can convince the World that you act out of Conscience, and whatsoever you shall be guilty of Contrary to this, will raise in all Men a just suspicion that you are acted by carnal Principles and moved by worldly Ends: Nothing but this can possibly preserve the Unity of Affection in the midst of so many Divisions and Subdivisions ( if this can do it. ) And nothing less than this Unity can preserve us from being a Prey to the Worst of Enemies we can dread.

The

## The Second Sermon.

J O H N 17. 4, 5.

*I have glorified thee on the Earth, I have  
finisht the work which thou gavest me  
to do.*

*And now, O Father, glorifie thou me with  
thine own self, with the glory which I  
had with thee before the World was.*

**N**othing can afford so much  
comfort and support, in the  
day of Calamity or Death, as  
the Conscience of a well spent  
Life; a faithful discharge of our Duty,  
being the Sole-Rational Proof of our  
*sincerity*, and our sincerity being the on-  
ly solid ground of *Hope*, and assurance  
towards God. *If our heart (i. e. our  
Conscience) condemn us not, then have  
we confidence towards God, 1 John 3. 21.*

This is a Lesson our Saviour has  
taught us by his own Example here in  
my Text; very well knowing that the  
time of his Death and Crucifixion was  
very near at hand, that he might forti-

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he himself against all the Terrours of it, by confirming and strengthening, *his Hope of that Joy that was set before him*, he enters upon a survey of his past Life, collects all his performances, reflects upon his Actions, and calls himself to an account concerning the Discharge of that *Trust* which God had committed to him, of the great *Work* which he had undertaken for the Salvation of man, and the Honour of God: And finding upon a just and Impartial Reflection that he had through the whole Course of his Life, acquitted himself faithfully and vigorously, his Soul rejoiceth within him, and he breaks out into expressions of holy *Confidence* and an assur'd and earnest expectation of the *Reward* of his Obedience and Faithfulness. *I have glorified thee on the Earth, &c. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, &c.*

Thus I have in part explained the words already, having given you an account of the Occasion, Design and Tendency of them: As they belong properly and peculiarly to our Saviour they imply two things.

First, His Faithful Discharge of his Prophetick Office; *I have glorified thee, &c.* This consisted especially — I. In publishing

publishing the will of God to the World, as he himself explains it more fully in the following part of the Chapter —

2. In the proof and Evidence he gave of his Commission from God, and the Divinity of his Doctrine, which was the *Wonderfulness* of his works, and the unparalleled *Sanctity* of his Life.

Secondly, His Expectation of Reward, consisting in the exaltation of his Human Nature, and it's admission into a participation of that Glory, which he enjoy'd with the Father from all Eternity. *And now, O Father, Glorify thou me with thine own self, with the Glory which I had with thee before the World was.*

But if we consider that Christ is the Christians great pattern that his Life is propos'd to us, as an Example to our Obedience, that his peace and joy is in some degree the Portion and Blessing of every faithful Disciple, and follower of his, and that lastly his exaltation and Glory is the Original and *Idæa*, by which ours shall in it's due proportion be form'd and modelled, I may very well be allowed to interpret the behaviour of our Lord in my Text as an Example set us all in general, containing matter of Instruction and Advice to all



Christians, which may be resolv'd into these two Propositions,

1st. *That there is a Work given every one of us to finish*, a Duty prescrib'd each of us by the Conscientious performance of which *we may glorifie God on the Earth.*

2dly. That a Christian's Comfort and Assurance in Death, if rational, ought to flow from the Conscience of a faithful discharge of this Duty.

S. 1st. *That there is a work, &c.* The Duties of human Life are of two sorts; *First*, such as are common to all as *Men and Christians.* *Secondly*, such as are proper and peculiar to some Men as engag'd in distinct *Callings and Professions* as *Men and Christians*, Sobriety, Purity, Truth, Justice, Charity, Meekness, Long-Suffering, Devotion, Faith, Self-Resignation, Obedience, and such like are the works which God hath pre-ordain'd that we should walk in: These are Reflections and Raies of the Divine glory, these are the Tracts and Characters of the Divine Image, these are the Ornaments and true Excellencies of a Christian in comparison of which, the Celebrated Exploits of the Heathen Gods, *Jupiter, Hercules, Bacchus, &c.* are, as *Lactantius* speaks, but childish brave-

braveries, the blind Sallies of an Impotent passion, of an Unballasted Impetus: By the constant and sincere practice of these, we exalt and perfect our Natures, advancing them into a nearer participation of the Divine Image; by the constant and sincere practice of these, we procure the peace, the security, the Welfare and Prosperity of human Society; And finally, by the constant and sincere practice of these, we adorn the Gospel of Christ, promote the Honour of God, and *shew forth the praises of him who called us out of Darkness into his Marvellous Light*; for nothing does more convincingly manifest and publish to the World the Honourable Notions we entertain of God, the Purity and Power of our Christian Faith, than a Life employ'd and spent in these works; for by this we openly proclaim to the World, that we do not believe that a Holy and good God can be pleas'd with any thing but Holiness and Goodness, or that any Sacrifice can be so acceptable to him as the Imitation (according to our power) of his Divine Perfections.

Besides these Duties common to all Christians, there are others which flow from

from our distinct Professions and Callings. Every Man's Calling, whether he be a Pastor in the Church or a Ruler or Officer in the State, whether he be a Trader, Physician, &c. doth more peculiarly exact some distinct kind of Vertue; As Watchfulness in Pastors, Integrity in Rulers, Justice in Traders, Tenderneſs in Physicians, and ſuch like, and in all, Industry and Diligence: Nor doth it a little import the Honour of our Religion, and the Welfare of human Society, that every Man do faithfully diſcharge the particular and diſtinct Duty, of his Calling; nor can he neglect it without involving himſelf in the guilt of trampling under foot the moſt powerfull obligations; for *this* the abilities God endows him with, *this*, the truſt God commits to him; *this*, the Dependencies others have reaſonably fixt upon him; *this*, the general Covenant ſuppos'd entred into by every Member of a Community, that he will be uſeful and helpful in his place; *this*, the Inter-eſt of the publick, and the glory of God loudly calls and preſſes every man to; it being impoſſible, that Decency and Order in human Affairs ſhould be preſerv'd, that the Beauty and Harmony of Divine Provi-

providence should be maintain'd, that the mutual wants and necessities of Mankind should be ministred to, and supplied, or the Honour of God supported and upheld in the World, unless Men be faithful in the discharge of the Duties, of their several Callings and Professions: This is that the Apostle exhorts to, *Rom. 12. 6, 7, 8. Having then gifts differing according to the Grace that is given to us, whether Prophecy, let us Prophesie according to the Proportion of Faith; or Ministry, let us wait on our Ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation: He that ruleth let him do it, with diligence.* The same Faithfulness and Diligence Men are elsewhere in Scripture exhorted to, in their secular and Prophane Callings.

You see then what the works are which God prescribes us to walk in, namely, the works of our general Callings as we are *Men* and *Christians*; and the works of our distinct Professions, as we are dedicated to different employments in Church or State. You discern in the next place the natural bent and Tendency of these works towards the glorifying God on the Earth. This, then is the Post which you are to make good



good ; this is the station you are to fill ; this is the Province you are to adorn ; you cannot otherwise acquit your selves with a good Conscience towards God or Man. And hence it follows —

§. 2dly. That the Faithful discharge of our Duty is the only Rational ground of our Assurance towards God. 'Tis true and confessed on all hands, that the Death and Merits of Christ is the great cause of our Peace and Reconciliation with God ? that through him, through him alone, all Christians are to expect the pardon of their sins, and the acceptance of their performances ; That when we have done all, we are unprofitable Servants : And that the most unblameable and Pious Life that ever was yet led upon Earth (except that of Christs himself) could never be able to undergo the Test, the Tryal of God's strict Judgment. And therefore our Deceased Friend, notwithstanding the nature and number of his good works not easily to be parallell'd (though I wish they were) by many Instances in this Age, gave us this short account of his Faith and Hope the day before his Death, *I trust in the mercy of God.*

But

But though all this be true, 'tis all nothing to the point in hand; for though Christ died for all, yet all have not a like or equal ground of Hope: Tho' the Death of Jesus be sufficient to atone for the sins of all, yet all are not actually pardoned: The Question therefore is, what gives Men a good Claim and a just Title to the Benefits of Christ's passion; and what is the clearest proof of the goodness of our Claim; and then nothing is more evident than that this is a faithful discharge of the Duties of Life, *a finishing the works God gives us to do.* These are the proper effects of saving Knowledge, and a saving Faith; These are the very Essentials of Repentance towards God; These are the kindly Operations of Love unfeigned; These are the proper tokens of the Divine presence, and the Residence of God's Spirit within us; These lastly are the natural and genuine fruits of an enlightned understanding, and renew'd mind: These therefore are the best proofs and evidences of our claim to all the Benefits of Christ's Death and Merits, and consequently the most Rational Foundation of our Peace and Comfort in our Latter end. This is evident

evident from the Examples of all Righteous and good men, whose Comfort in Death is wont to be proportion'd to the Piety and Sincerity of their Lives ; hence (not to multiply Instances) that of Saint Paul, 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. *I have fought a good fight, I have finisht my Course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth, there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to them also that love his appearing.* Here we have the confident expectation of a Crown, but 'tis a Crown of Righteousness; and if we examine the ground of this confidence of St. Paul, it is, that War which he prosperously waged, those conflicts which he had successfully maintain'd against the World, the Flesh and the Devil; his Indefatigable Perseverance in the Race of Vertue and Goodness set before him: And finally, his stedfast and unshaken adherence to the Faith of Christ, in despite of all the malice and fury, with which he was assaulted.

Thus have I briefly insisted on the words of my Text, as reserving room for that which is a most fair and lively Comment on it, the Life of our deceased

ceas'd Friend. And here, in pursuance of my method, I should be obliged to begin with an account of his behaviour, in his particular profession; but having resolv'd to say nothing, but what I either personally know, or have full and unquestionable proof of, I will pass over this part of his Life, as that to which, I am in a great measure a stranger; though I cannot forbear recommending to you two Rules, which he thought necessary for the Christian Conduct of Trade. *First*, That Traders should carefully avoid the grasping at, and embracing so much business, as should make their Trade encroach and intrench upon their Religion, that they should not suffer their time and their hearts to be engross'd by the love and pursuit of Worldly gain, to the neglect and ruin of their Eternal Interest. *Secondly*, That they should propose and design an Increase of their Charity in proportion to the Increase of their Wealth. And now I proceed to the Life of our departed Friend, with regard to the general Obligations he lay under as *Man* and *Christian*, wherein we meet with these two things considerable, *His Religion towards God, and his Charity towards Man*. These two divided and shared



red his whole Life between them, there being very few Actions of it which might not be referred to the one or other, as the source and Principle of them.

First, *Of his Religion towards God.* This was that to which he dedicated and devoted himself betimes; *He remembered his Creator in the days of his Youth*; Nor was he more early than constant in this, for he persisted stedfast in it to the end; his Religion had no Interruption, no Intermission; I could never find that there was any the least period of his Life, which he abandon'd and gave up to an Indulgence of sin and folly. 'Tis true, as you all know, he was sometime misled in point of Judgment; but 'tis as true that under all the changes of Times and Opinions he retain'd his Sincerity and his Zeal. An Opinion of greater strictness of Life, and a more lively relish and savour of spiritual things amongst those of the separation first tempted him out of the bosom of our Church: and a deep sense of the manifold Impieties and dreadful mischiefs which attended separation first mov'd him to return to us; for this rais'd many scruples and perplexities in him, and made him reasonably doubt that God could  
not

not be the Author of that way. The method he afterwards took for a full and just Information, of himself; namely impartial Examination of our best writings, conference with our Ablest men, together with incessant prayers to God for the Illumination of his Spirit, the time and manner of his Return, his open acknowledgment of his error, his publick profession of Repentance, his solemn and earnest Invitation of others to return to the paths of Truth and Peace, and his successful Industry in recovering those whom he had been Instrumental to pervert, sufficiently demonstrate the Sincerity and Integrity of his heart: And those two excellent Treatises he has writ for the disabusing those of the Separation, have made an abundant Compensation for the Errours he was betray'd into through frailty and weakness of Judgment.

But I come now to his Religion, such as it was since I knew him, and so I'll say something of his own personal behaviour towards God, and of his zeal to propagate the fear of God among others.

As to his own behaviour, the Character of the Godly man in the Psalmist

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was truly his. *Blessed is the Man that walketh not in the Council of the Ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the Scornful. But his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night, Psalm. I. 1. 2.* He was a man that did abominate all Company wherein any thing was either said or done to the disparagement of Vertue, or dishonour of Religion: He was so far from pertaking in the guilt of any such thing, that he never wanted the courage to reprove and rebuke it: And as all filthy and Sinful Communication was an Abomination, so all trifling and unprofitable Communication was a burden to his Soul: And therefore it was, that his Conversation was reduc'd within so narrow a compasse, that he had very few Confidants and Intimates, and very little Company besides that of his near Relations and the Poor; this he was with regard to Negative Righteousness. As to positive Righteousness, it may be truly said of him, that *his delight was in the Law of the Lord*, whether this be to be inferred from meditation or practice, this could not but appear to every one that convers'd with him, for he was richly furnish

furnisht with Scripture Knowledge, he had treasured up the richest Portions of Divine Writ, he had digested them into nourishment and strength, and he was grown so familiarly acquainted with them, that there was no Doctrine of Faith or Duty of Practice, for which he could not readily urge several the most pertinent Texts of Scripture, and not only cite the words, the Chapter, the verse, but give a very rational account of the Spirit and design of them, and of their coherence with the Context. But his Religion, though it was, as it ought, begun and founded in *Knowledge*, yet it did not, like that of many men, terminate and end in it too, but was perfected and finished in *Practice*. He was wont to place all Religion in three things, *Contemplation*, *Adoration* and *Imitation*.

As to the first, that of *Contemplation*, which is to the other two, like Oyl to Flame that nourishes and supports it : You may guess by his Knowledge in Divine things, that he was no stranger to it. However one thing there is which deserves to be recommended to your Imitation, which is this ; after long experience his Soul was grown weary of fruitless Speculations and Barren Con-



troverfies, and his Meditations were of late wifely confin'd to thefe Excellent Subjects, the purity and holinefs of God, the riches of his Love and goodnefs to mankind manifested in Jeſus, and the bleſſednefs of a future ſtate, into which laſt he was very lately more particularly and Induſtriouſly inquiſitive beginning ſeveral diſcourſes with me on that Subject, and carrying 'em on with no little Pleaſure and Satisfaction.

As to *Adoration*, he complained, I confeſs to me, that of late, he could not put up his Petitions with that Vigour and Importunity, with that cloſe Application and Intention of Spirit which he had formerly done; but withall he added, that as to one part of *Adoration* that of Praise and Thankſgiving, his Soul did abound in that, and he ever found himſelf exalted and lifted up in that Exerciſe. This part of Adoration he has wont to account as a maintaining Communion with the Heavenly Inhabitants, and a joyning with the Church triumphant in their Hallelujahs. Upon which ground, as alſo becauſe the purpoſe and devoting of his heart towards God in reſpect of his Faith, Love, and Obedience continued ſtedfaſt and unmoveable

veable I was inclin'd to impute the Alteration he complain'd of, not to any abatement of his sincerity or zeal, but to the heaviness of his Age, and the Decay of his Spirits.

As to *Imitation* of God, he conceived that to consist mainly in *doing good*, of which I shall say something presently under the head of Charity, having first, according to the Order I propos'd, taken notice of his zeal in propagating the fear of God amongst others, which was no less eminent in him than the Piety of his own Demeanour towards God. He never let slip any opportunity either of reproofing and discountenancing vice, or of preaching up and recommending virtue, and this he did with that gravity and authority, and with that Goodness and Charity, with that Evidence of Scripture back't with strength of Reason and Experience, that he seldom missed of doing some good by it. He was extremely Solicitous to instruct Youth in the Principles of our Religion, for which purpose he had a Catechism of his own composing containing the grounds of our Christian Faith, which he did industriously imprint not only on the memories, but judgments and hearts

of young people ; he did often inculcate the necessity and usefulness of Writing Sermons, and repeating them at home ; he did often bewail the Corruption of Conversation, and recommend the advantage of gracious and good Discourses in our daily and familiar Entercourse with one another : he was zealous for the observation of Family-Duties, and in all this was eminently exemplary himself: His Resolution was that of *Joshua Chap. 24. 15. As for me, I and my House we will serve the Lord.* Nor can it be unknown to many here how successful he was in this, what a Spirit of Religion and Goodness Reigned in his Family, and what lasting impressions of both, his endeavours made in his Children ; and were it not that I should oppress their Modesty, and incur (it may be) an imputation of flattery which I detest and scorn, I would insist more largely upon this Topick, as a Noble encouragement to the watchfulness and Industry of Fathers and Masters over their Children and Families: From this his Charity to the Soul, I proceed.

2/y. To that which relates to the External state of man ; this was the second thing proposed to be spoken to, after

after his Religion towards God, *His Charity towards man.* This was that in which he conceived the Imitation of God most properly to consist, he was always wont to have in his Mouth that of the Prophet *Jeremy*, *But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understands and knows me that I am the Lord, which exercise Loving kindness, Judgment and Righteousness in the Earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord, Jer. 9. 24.* This therefore was the Vertue wherein he was Eminent and Exemplary; to this he so wholly gave up his Heart and his Life, that I may safely say he did in some degree renounce his own business and his own Interest, that he might with less distraction and better success attend the Concerns of the poor and miserable. 'Tis true, (that I may here anticipate the Objection of some sort of men) the *Charities* he undertook and engag'd himself in, were too many and too great to be carried on upon his own single stock or particular fund; he had therefore assistance many ways; and much from many good men, I believe, here present: but 'tis as true too, that he was not only a faithful Steward and dispenser of other mens Bounty, but



also Bountiful himself even to the diminution of his estate. To go on therefore to the point several Hundreds of Prisoners were by him, with great travail and expence set free; Nay, Prisons themselves were set free from some oppressions and cheats that had obtain'd in them, and render'd more hospitable and tolerable to the miserable Inhabitants, Fees being reduced to a Lower rate, and maintenance and Provision for Prisoners much better settled: Several entangled estates were by his care, prudence and labour clear'd and preserv'd: Many desolate Orphans found in him the tenderness and compassion of a Father, and many desolate Widows the Care and Protection of a Husband: How tender and liberal he was to very many Relations that stood in need of him, is well known to many here. Finally, such Numbers of Poor were relieved by him, that he was continually throng'd by flocks of his Clients, (as he called them) and he could scarce pass any street where the Blessings of some one or other succour'd by him, did not light upon him. Nor did his Charity exert it self only in the Relief of the poor and needy, but also in ministering to every sort of necessity and

and misery of mankind ; he comforted the afflicted, rescued the oppressed, advised and counselled the Ignorant, and subdued the Obstinate by the sweetness of his address, by the meekness of Reason, and an extraordinary Spirit of Religion, which discover'd it self in all his Discourses : In Sum, what *Job* said of himself, may be with truth applied to this good man. *I delivered the poor that cried, and the Fatherless and him that had none to help him : the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me ; and I caused the Widows heart to sing for joy. I put on Righteousness, and it cloathed me ; My judgment was as a Robe, and a Diadem : I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lamé ; I was a Father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not, I search'd out, and I brake the Jaws of the wicked, and pluck'd the Spoil out of his Teeth, Job 29. 11, 12, &c.* Here I should have concluded with this general account, were there not in his *Charity* three things so eminently and peculiarly remarkable, that they deserve never to be forgot, his *Meekness*, his *Industry*, and his *Delight in doing good*.

First.

First. His *Meekness*. He had a Text to this purpose which he did often repeat, *Let it not grieve thee to bow down thine Ear to the Poor, and to give him a friendly answer with Meekness, Eccclus. 4. 8.* And he liv'd up to this Rule; no sourness or churlishness of Speech, no impatience or insolence of Behaviour did ever embitter his Aids or Relief to the needy: *Charity* was not a greater Ornament to *Him*, than his *Sweetness* and *Meekness* was to his *Charity*: He would often hear not only tedious and impertinent but also rude and passionate discourses, with matchless Patience and Goodness, having regard to the miseries not the frailties of those who addressed themselves to him.

Secondly, His *Industry*. He had often in his Mouth that of the Psalmist, *Blessed is he that considers the Poor*, and that of *Job* just now cited, *The cause that I knew not, I search'd out*: And accordingly he did with indefatigable patience sound the depths, and fathom the bottom of every cause; and then he did with great solicitude and earnestness of mind, study contrive and consult what method was most likely to prove effectual for the redress of the miserable; and

and when he had fixt upon it, he set his heart so much upon the accomplishment of his design that there were seldom, if ever, any difficulties so great, which he did not one way or other remove or surmount: And he never thought much of the time or travail which he bestowed thus: So intent was he upon the excellent works of Charity, that he pursued them panting, and almost breathless; and I have sometimes heard him regret the Weakness and Infirmary of his Age, and express his Fear, lest he should live to those years, wherein, through defect of Strength, he might be utterly useless. Indeed, his decay'd body was not at length able to undergo all the drudgery which so many and considerable designs of Charity did require; and therefore, for several his last years he maintain'd a Servant on purpose to receive and execute his Directions.

*One passage under this head I forgot in the Pulpit, and it deserves not to be omitted in the press, which is, that he was often advised and pressed to go into the Country for his health's sake; against this, he urged many scruples, which though they appear'd not to others of sufficient weight, yet*



yet he could never bring his mind to it; What shall my Poor then do? said he, 'tis even best for me to die in my Station and in my Employment.

Such was his Vigour, such his Industry. And God was pleas'd to bless him with suitable success; so that 'tis not easie to express his *Felicity* in mollifying the most obdurate Creditors, in reducing them to terms of Moderation and Charitable composition, in reconciling differences, and in sweetning the most alienated and exasperated minds.

Thirdly, His *Delight*. It was one of his darling Propositions which he set a high rate upon, *That the Life of Man is to be estimated by the usefulness of it*; and accordingly that portion of his Life was always most delightful and valuable to him, wherein he was most successfully active in some design of Charity; his Spirit rejoiced within him, when God had blessed him in the accomplishment of any good work; and I may confidently say, that never Souldier entertain'd Victory, or Trader the increase of his Wealth with a truer satisfaction than he did the successes of his Charitable Labours. I confess, that taking notice, how much he was pleas'd with

with reflecting upon and repeating himself several of his achievements, and with hearing the Echoes and Rebounds of them from others, I grew sometimes jealous of him, lest *Dead Flies* should corrupt this *Oyntment*, and a silly affectation of Praise and vain glory should blast his Charity and bereave him of the Fruit and Reward of it; but upon narrower Inspection into the Root of this matter, I found that this sprung from the pleasure he took in the Comfort and Happiness which he procur'd to others: his pious Soul, as it did suffer in the misery, so did it exult in the Prosperity of his Brother, as he was ready to *weep with those that wept*, so also to *rejoice with those that rejoiced*, and so much the more whenever God had made him the Instrument of their Joy, so that it was not his own praise that created his Satisfaction, but the good procur'd his Neighbour, and the honour which did from thence redound to God.

Shall I now after all, add his Justice, Integrity and Diligence in all his dealings and undertakings? His Simplicity and Candour, his Ingenuity, Meekness and Humility in all his Conversation?

tion? His Plainness, Sincerity and Zeal towards his Friend, shewed it self especially in his tenderness for his Eternal Interest? The sweetness and obligingness of his carriage, not towards his Children only, but even towards the meanest that had any Relation to him? Shall I add his Christian Moderation, and Comprehensive Charity, for all peaceful humble, and upright Christians of every persuasion? Shall I insist upon his Purity and Heavenly mindedness, not only to an Indifference, but (I may almost say) even Contempt for the things of this World, Wealth, Power, Honour and the Ostentation of Life? Shall I finally remember his strictness and Sobriety, which was such, that I had much ado to remove some Scruples out of his mind about the use of such things, as I judg'd necessary to the support of his age, and the maintenance of his health and strength? These and other Vertues of our deceas'd Friend, I might insist upon, and in all this, I should have the testimony and Approbation of all that knew him: But the time would fail me, and I have said enough, enough to do right in some measure to the memory of this excellent person,

person, for the *Righteous shall be had in everlasting Remembrance*; enough to administer unspeakable comfort and satisfaction to his Relations, and enough, I hope, to excite and stir up all that hear me this Day to the Imitation of this good man's Vertues, especially when we shall add the consideration in my Text, that this will fortifie us against all the Terrours of Death; this will give us comfort and Assurance in the approaches of it. Then shall we be able to assure our selves *that we are the Children of God*, when we imitate his goodness, and rejoyce, as he doth, in the works of Mercy and Charity: Then shall we be able to assure our selves that we are the true followers of Jesus, when we are led by the same spirit, when we *glorify God upon Earth, and finish the works which he has given us to do*: And then shall we be able to lie down in the assured expectations of a blessed Resurrection. This was the happy state of this excellent man; Death was his Meditation, Death his Expectation; and when he met it, he met it with a chearful and serene soul; the Last words I had from him when I bid him my last farewell on Sunday, were, *Tou and I shall meet*



*meet again in another World, I do not question it at all. Ah! that we could all live so as to have no fears, no doubts about eternal Life when we are come to die! O think of the blessedness of such a state! and then remember that this assurance arises from the conscience of a well spent Life, that nothing but a faithful discharge of our stewardship can enable us to meet God with comfort, and give us an Inheritance with Saints in glory, and enrol us amongst the Spirits of Just men made perfect.*

**The**

## The Third Sermon.

ACTS xxiv. 16.

*And herein do I exercise my self to have  
always a Conscience void of offence to-  
wards God, and towards Man.*

**D** ID I design to entertain you with the Character of *St. Paul*, I am sensible I could not begin it more advantageously than with that of *Felix, Tertullus*, and the *Jews* his Prosecutors; the *Abilities* and *Corruption* of the one, the *Eloquence* and *Mercenarinefs* of the other, the *Bigottry*, *Malice*, and *ill Arts* of the last, serving most fitly as foils or shades to set off and adorn his *Vertue* and *Integrity*; but purposing to consider these words, not so much as the Character of *St. Paul*, as the Rule and Standard of Christian Life in general, and consequently not to survey the History of his Life, which in all the several instances and parts of it would apparently justify and make good this short Account he has

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given us of it, but to assist you to regulate and conduct your own. I will advance directly to the body of the Text, without stopping you by any Remarks or Reflections on any thing in the Context.

The words are part of the Apology which St. Paul made for his Religion and himself before the Tribunal of *Felix*. In the 14 and 15 Verses he wipes off the Asperision of Novelty and Schism cast by *Tertullus* on his Religion, asserting that it was no other than what was taught by the Law and the Prophets; in this he frees himself from the Calumny of Turbulency and Sedition, avowing boldly the Innocence and Integrity of his Life, *herein do I exercise myself, &c.* Where we have,

*First*, The great Business and End of St. Paul's Religion, *to have a Conscience void of offence towards God and towards Man.*

*Secondly*. His Diligence and Industry in the pursuit of it; *herein do I exercise my self.*

*Thirdly*, The close connexion of this Verse with the former by way of inference and deduction, shews us the ground and motive of all this; namely, the be-  
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lief of a Resurrection, ver. 15. And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Supposing now that the Example of St. Paul passes, as indeed it does, an Obligation upon all Christians, to imitate it; for it becometh us to be followers of him, as he was of Christ, 1 Cor. 11. 1.

Accommodating all this to our selves, I will begin with the Duty in my Text, and shew you,

First, In general, what it is to have a Conscience void of Offence, and then more particularly, what it is as it relates, first, to God, and next, to Man.

To have a Conscience void of Offence, speaking in general terms, is to have a Conscience neither abused by false Principles, nor overpower'd by inordinate Affections: a Conscience that neither misleads nor disturbs and tortures us; a Conscience that neither renders us secure and confident in the wrong, nor upbraids us with any Hypocritical prevarication or willful violation of the right. To such a Conscience you will easily resolve two things necessary, *Illumination* and *Obedience*. *Illumination*



makes a *right* Conscience, *Obedience* a *good* one; both together a *Conscience void of offence*. I say, both together; for first, as to the necessity of *Obedience*, in vain are the Dictates and Commands of Conscience, be it never so well informed or enlightned, if *Avarice* and *Ambition*, *Lust* or *Revenge*, or any other irregular Appetite cannot pleasure, baffle, and insult them.

Nor is the necessity of *Illumination* less evident; Religion and Property are no more secure from the Invasions of a *seduced* than a *seared* Conscience; false Principles may betray Men into all the Crimes, and give birth to all the Mischiefs which Lusts and Passions do; Men may be led by an abused Conscience to rend and divide the Church, to subvert and betray our Laws and Liberties, and to expose our Religion and our Country; *i. e.* in one word, all that is dear to us, to the Insolence and Cruelty of a Foreign Enemy and a Popish Persecution; this an abused Conscience may do, what can *Luxury* and *Irreligion*, the Lust of Money, the Lust of Power do worse? This I have said to convince such as would have a *Conscience void of offence*, of the indispensable Obligation

ligation they lie under, not only to act and live up to the Dictates of Conscience, but also to endeavour with all Meekness, Sincerity, and Impartiality to inform it aright; without the one you will fall under the many stripes of the Servant in the Gospel, *who knew his Master's will and did it not*, Luke 12.

47. Without the other, under the Woe pronounced by the Prophet against such as call *good evil, and evil good*, Isai. 5. 20.

I easily foresee this general Account of the Duty in my Text will be encountered with two Objections: First, How shall we find out Truth and Right, when the Cunning and the Learned have raised such a Mist about it, when the Lusts and Interest of Men have perplexed and entangled it with so many endless subtilties and distinctions? Where shall we find a certain Rule, when Divinity and Law, how constant and inflexible soever they may be in themselves, are accommodated to every Design, forc'd to yield Patronage and Countenance to every Cause; and in a word, seem to speak no Language but such as Power and Interest inspire? Without examining the Justice of this Objection,

whether it be a Calumny or a Truth, the Product of Spite, Atheism, and Profaneness, or of an humble Conscience of Humane Infirmary, and the real difficulty of finding out Truth and Right in some Cases. I Answer, Be it so, yet have we a Clew that will easily wind us out of this Labyrinth, and that is *Sincerity*, by which I mean an honest and humble Endeavour to know our Duty, and a steady Resolution to perform it; this will either prevent our Error, or else prevent the mischief and malignity of it; the upright Man shall never want light to guide him into truth and Right, or Goodness and Charity to extinguish like a Sovereign Antidote the Venom and Poyson of false Principles and Error, for that of Solomon, *He that walks uprightly, walks safely*, Prov. 10. 9. And the Gospel promises of Spiritual Assistance and Illumination, can import no less. And thus I am got clear of the first Difficulty.

A Second Objection I am to expect is this, But alas when we know our Duty, how hard a Task is it to do it? If nothing less than acting and living up to the Dictates of Conscience, can gain us a Conscience void of Offence, alas, who

who then can have it ! Is it not *Pelagianism, Papery*, or something worse to assert the possibility of keeping the Commandments of God ? Is it so ? What means then that place of our Saviour, *If a man love me he will keep my Commandments*, John 14. 23. and many other to the same purpose ? But without entring into this Controversie, I answer, When I tell you, that a Conscience void of Offence is such a one as doth not reproach us with any wilful violations of our Duty, I neither exclude Sin in the past life, nor defects in the present : But first, I exclude a deliberate continuance in any known sin : And in the next place, I make a difference, as the Scriptures and the Fathers have taught me, between *Defects* and *Crimes*, between *Infirmity* and *Wickedness* ; for such is the frailty of Humane Nature, that it unavoidably subjects us to the one, and such the Power and Excellency of our Religion, that it raises us above the other.

It is now high time to proceed from this general to a more particular and distinct Survey of this Duty in my Text : This by *St. Paul* is divided into two branches, our Duty towards

God, and our Duty towards Man; and each of these may again be sub-divided into two, for our Duty towards God may regard either his Publick or Private Worship; and our Duty towards Man may regard either his Publick or Private Rights.

*First, Of our Obligation to the Publick Worship or Service of God.* I need not tell you surely how much the Honour of Religion, and the safety of the Nation depends upon the due performance of this. *The Honour of our Religion*; 'tis not the Service of the Closter, but of the Temple which falls under Publick Notice and Observation; and therefore 'tis the Unity and Order, the Comeliness and Devoutness of this that creates a Veneration for Religion, and raises the Reputation of a Church; and how far the safety of the Nation is interested in this, not only Scripture and Reason too, but our own Experience can inform us. Scripture and Reason tell us, *That a House divided against it self cannot stand*, Mat. 12. 25. And experience, sad, sad Experience teaches us, that we no sooner divide in our Opinions and Worship, but we divide in our Affections too; and such is the Folly of some,



some, and the Cunning and Malice of others, that 'tis impossible, or next to impossible, but that these Cantons and Divisions should be presently formed into Combinations and Factions, which first sharpened their Tongues and Pens, and then their Swords against one another.

But to mention other Obligations to the Publick Worship of God, this is the best and most effectual means of promoting the *Glory of God, and the Happiness and Edification of Man*, Publick and Solemn Adorations are the most Illustrious Testimonies we can render God of our Homage and Dependance: United Prayers do most powerfully prevail either to engage the Favour, or appease the displeasure of God: And Publick Instruction, which ought always to be a part of the Publick Service of God, is so necessary, that I doubt the World would grow Atheistical and Barbarous without it; since 'tis to be feared that not only the far greater part of the Common-People, but some also of better Quality, owe all the Divinity they have to Holy-days and Sundays.

Now this being so, the Glory of God, and Good of Man, the Honour of Religion,

ligion, and the Safety of our Nation depending so much upon the Publick Worship of God, it is easie for us to infer what Obligation every Man lies under to advance and support the Solemnity and Credit of it, and what guilt they contract, who either causelessly absent, or, which is worse, divide from it; And how much more they who either by a careless, rude, and contemptuous carriage at Church, or by their open and notorious Immoralities at other times, are a scandal to it: Or they, lastly, who by studied and malicious Calumnies and Aspersions beget in Men a dis-esteem and contempt of it.

But though it be the Duty of every Christian not only to Worship God publickly, but also as much as in him lies to advance Unity and Order in the Publick Worship, and to support and raise the Esteem of it; yet surely none can be more obliged to this than the Magistracy, Nobility, and Gentry of a Nation; Mens Gratitude to God ought to be proportioned to their Obligations, and those whom God has distinguished from the rest of Mankind by his particular Favours, ought to distinguish themselves by a more particular and eminent Zeal  
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for his Service: But if Gratitude cannot, methinks Interest should prevail with Persons of Rank and Dignity in a Nation to espouse the Cause of Religion; I mean, to support and advance the established Worship of God; for these are they who must unavoidably suffer most, in all the Confusions which Irreligion and Schism usher in. These have Estates, Honours, Perquisites, Power, things fit to be the Quarry of the Needy, Covetous, and Ambitious, or the Scorn and Sport of the Insolent and Discontented: and this does generally fall out as often as either Luxury and Riot effeminate and dispirit a Nation, or open Prophaneness and Irreligion extinguishes in the Multitude all Reverence for Magistracy or Laws, or the Contempt of an Established Church, and the increase and licentiousness of Sects breed Anarchy in the State; or finally, the displeasure of God pours down Reproaches upon the Heads of those that have dishonoured him, according to his constant Rule, *Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed,* 1 Sam. 2. 30.

To sum up all on this Head, and prevent any misapplication, considering  
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how far the Glory of God, and the Good of Man is interested in God's Publick Worship amongst us, I would have the Breasts of all Men. and especially of those of Power and Rank, inflamed with the love of it, and a Zeal for the Honour and Defence of it. And if it be demanded, which way I would have them express this; I answer plainly, by the open Practice of Devotion and Vertue themselves, and by countenancing and encouraging it in others, by a rational and calm Defence of the Worship and Doctrine of the Church against vain Cavils and Noveltries, by a vigilant and courageous, but Christian Opposition, and countermining of all the secret Practices or open Hostilities of such Men as endeavour to defame, weaken, and subvert the Religion established, not out of Conscience towards God, but indeed Atheism, Restlessness, Ambition, Revenge, or some other ungodly Lust.

Finally, by a hearty Concurrence with the Government for the suppressing all open Immorality, and advancing the Practice of Godliness and Religion amongst us, that there may be no room amongst us for the Complaint of the Psalmist, *Who will rise up with me against the*

*the wicked, or who will take my part against the wicked doer, Psal. 94. 16.* This puts me in mind of another branch of our Duty towards God; namely, his Private Worship or Service.

By the *Private Worship or Service of God*, is to be understood not only private Prayers, but all Acts either of Obedience to the Commands, or Submission and Resignation to the Providence of God. From amongst all these I will recommend to you two things as most necessary and pertinent at present.

I. *Sobriety or Watchfulness* over your selves at this and all other times of your Meeting.

It is a matter of very melancholy Reflection, that in that thing we call Society and Conversation, the Gentleman and the Christian, Mirth and Religion should be thought so inconsistent and incompatible; what, must Men, to flee Preciseness, needs run into Debauchery? and cannot Sourness or Dulness be banished Conversation, but Modesty and Sobriety must be so too? Time was when the Meetings and Entertainments of Christians (might I not to our shame add of well-bred Pagan's) was Philosophical, Edifying, and Instructive; but  
now



now they seem to minister only to Sin and Folly, to spread and propagate Looseness and Vanity: Ah, how wretched their Nature, and more wretched their Education; how mean the Parts, and how much meaner the Acquaintance of those Men, who have neither Wit enough to render Conversation Entertaining, nor Learning or Experience enough to render it Useful; nor Vertue or Business enough to render it Innocent. If this be so, as sure it is; if Intemperance be the Refuge of Idleness, Duncery, and ill Breeding, methinks Men of Parts, Education, or Business, should shun it as an Imputation and a Scandal: a Consideration which sometimes prevails when the great motives of Religion fail.

But in the next place, as Religion must not be drowned nor washed away by Intemperance, so neither must it be choaked and starved by Worldly Cares and Covetousness. It is a melancholy Remark, but such a one that scarce escapes any body, That there are too many who seem to affect something that comes very near up to a Contempt of Religion; as if it were a Scandal to Men of Business to own any leisure for Religion.

on in publick or private; what is Prophaneness and Atheism if this be not; What is this but to own either that your Business is such, that it were Impudence to beg or expect a Blessing on it; or that you do not think the Providence and Patronage of God necessary to your Success; or finally, that you do not believe another World, and therefore are only intent to provide for this. Ah, what degrees of Madness and Folly is not Man capable of! Ah, by how many, and how directly contrary ways are we ensnared, and so perish! What need have we to Watch over our selves when Business is as apt to intoxicate and infatuate us as Pleasure, and Drudgery to prove as fatal as our Luxury! I have put you in mind sufficiently of such parts of our Duty towards God as I thought most proper for our present Consideration, and am now naturally led on to the second thing: that is, our Duty towards Man. For Religion towards God is the Best Foundation of Justice towards Man. Now Humane Rights being, as I told you, of two sorts, publick and private, and it being necessary to a Conscience void of Offence towards Man, to be tender of rendring both, I'll begin with the first.

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By *Publick Rights* I mean the Rights of *Prince and People*; for that the People have Rights too as well as the Prince, is evident from Scripture which by giving us this Definition of the Supream Magistrate, That *he is the Minister of God to us for good*, Rom. 13. 4. does plainly teach us, that the good of the people, that is, the Maintenance and Protection of them in their just Rights and Liberties, is the very End and Reason of Civil Government; and if this be so, he perverts the Scripture who pretends Warrant from it to advance the Absoluteness of the Monarch upon the Servitude of the People, and to Sacrifice the Rights of the one to the Humour or Fancy of the other.

It is true, a *People* or Nation by their own Crimes or an unjust Force may be reduced to the unhappy Necessity of Redeeming their Lives by the loss of their Fortunes and Liberties, and in such a case they must stand to those *Pacts and Covenants* they thus enter into. But whatever be the Condition of any other Nation, blessed be God this is not ours; our Constitution and Laws have so many marks in them of a due Temperament of Power in the Prince, and Liberty in  
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the People, as do sufficiently demonstrate that we are born *Subjects*, not *Slaves*.

And 'tis a vain Attempt here to pretend to evince a *Voluntary Slavery* from our *Oaths* and *Laws*; for who can be so superstitiously stupid, as not to discern that *Laws* are not to be the *Chains* and *Fetters*, but the *Guards* and *Fences* of the *People's Just Rights* and *Liberties*; and that our *Oaths* must never be interpreted to weaken and subvert, but strengthen and preserve the *National Constitution*.

I do not forget the *Rights* of the *Prince*, which must not be invaded neither, nor infringed by any *Pretensions* of the *People*. But I shall say nothing of them now, not only to decline the *Censures* of *Flattery*, *Temporizing*, and *Ambition*, or whatever else Men would please to pass on me, for *Discourses* on this *Argument* never escape without running the *Gauntlet* through all sides and parties, but also because this has been abundantly done of late, to the silencing of all *Objections* raised against our *Allegiance* to their present *Majesties*.

But when all these kind of *Objections* are answered, which in the mouths of

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most Men, whatever they are ( in some few ) are but shams and pretences, there is another which penetrates deeper, and spreads much further; that is, *The Impoverishment of the Nation by Taxes*, even such as acknowledge this Revolution a Deliverance, and own it for a Blessing, do yet seem to regret the Price of it, and begin to fear lest they should pay too dear for it.

Now the Being of our Church and Nation, the Liberty and Peace of *Europe*, and the Preservation of the Protestant Religion depending so much upon the Success of Their Majesties Undertakings, and this again upon the Chearfulness and good Affection of their *English* Subjects, I shall not be thought, I hope, to pass my bounds, especially having a Text for it too, *Tribute to whom Tribute is due*, if I take upon me in a word or two to examine the Justice of a Complaint, which tends so much to alienate mens minds from their Majesties Persons and Government, or very much to abate their Zeal for both. *The taxes are heavy*; suppose it: But would a Foreign Yoak, Popery, and Persecution be lighter? Would the Oppression and Rapine of Arbitrary Lust be more easie than Parliamentary and Legal Impositions? Or  
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would it be more Honourable or Tolerable to us to Sacrifice our Blood and Treasure to a lawless Fancy and Ambition, or in the Defence of our Laws and Liberty, Religion and Property? *The Nation is Impoverished.* Be it so: But yet our Harvests are not reaped with the Swords of our Enemies; our Granaries, Barns, and Houses are not every where on a light fire; the Country is not laid desolate, nor our Cities in Rubbage and Ashes; our Wives and Daughters are not Ravished before our Eyes, our Children murdered, our Faith tortured, nor our own Blood spilt promiscuously in the Fields and Lanes, High-ways and Streets: This is the Fortune of others, this is the State from which we redeem our Selves by the payment of Taxes. But methinks I need not yet carry the matter so high, lower Considerations may yet serve to satisfy reasonable Men: 'Tis very ungrateful in us towards God, to forget so soon those Times wherein we were willing to part with the one half of all that we had, for the Insurance of the other: And 'tis not over grateful to our Prince, that while in this Cause, our own Cause, he is Prodigal of his Blood, we should be niggardly and parsimonious

monious of our Money, and murmur at the Charge of our own Safety,

But further yet, blessed be God, while we complain of our *Taxes* we complain of our *Plenty* too, such is the affluence and abundance of all things; there is no want of Bread or Cloth, I wish I could not say our Pride and Vanity, our Intemperance and Riot proclaim us to have no great want of *Money* neither: But however this be, there is a ready Remedy, Frugality and Modesty would soon pay our *Taxes*; and if we should quit our *Luxury* to purchase our *Security*, if we should sacrifice our *Pride* and *Vanity* to the *Defence* of our *Liberty* and *Religion*, methinks this were no great damage to us.

I hope there cannot any be found so fantastically fond of Change, so transported by Discontent, or destitute of Sense and the love of their Native Country as to expect better Times under a *French* Conquest: What, is not Arbitrary Government the same thing it ever was? Is Popery grown less Bloody, or less Superstitious? Or his Bigottry grown mild and gracious by being irritated and exasperated? What is it Men can expect from such a Revolution?

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Will that Prince that makes other Countries a Wilderness, make ours a Paradise? Will he that harasses and oppresses his own Subjects, and will not endure to be controuled either by Law or Religion, be scrupulous and tender of our *English* Laws, Rights and Liberties? Will he who has hitherto placed Glory in Subtility and Cruelty, Blood and Falshood, change his Notion in the moment he overcomes us, and pursue it in Acts of Mildness and Goodness, of Honour and Justice? These sure are Miracles fit for no Faith but that which swallows Transubstantiation. But alas, if we could suppose even all this, our Fortunes and Treasure are the least Demands the Necessity and Ambition of that Prince can stoop to; and he will never want Pretences to make such Demands appear Just and Reasonable: But if all this were not so, our Religion, our innate love of Liberty, and aversion to a Tyrannical Yoak, much more a Foreign one, and much more yet a *French* one, render us incapable of being either trusted or indulged by him; he will never think his own Power and Interest secure while there remains any thing either of our *English* Courage un-

broke, our Fortunes unexhausted, or our Religion uncorrupted, and will look upon himself obliged to reduce us to the lowest degree of Impotence and Tame-ness: that is, to the condition of poor, cow'd Slaves, or despicable Apostates or Renegadoes. Had not the weight and importance of the matter detained me, I should not have insisted so long on this first Branch of our Duty towards Man, but I now hasten to the other, that is,

Our regard for private Rights: Various are the Rights of Men, and innumerable the ways by which they may be infringed and violated: But I'll insist only upon one, *i. e.* when Law is made the Instrument of wrong; and this happens several ways:

*First*, When one Man persecutes another with vexatious Suits; 'tis true, they run into a mad extream, who extend Christian Patience so far as to pronounce all Suits or Appeals to the Civil Magistrate unchristian; but 'tis as true too, that to approve and countenance all Suits, is to run into another; if every trifling Cause may warrant our demand of Reparation, and this Demand be pursued with all the Spight, and Hear,  
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and Calumnies imaginable; If Spight and Malice commence Justice, when prosecuted under a form of Law, I see not what Obligation Christian Patience does pass upon us, unless it be to suffer what we cannot Revenge. Can this be agreeable to the *not resisting evil*, Matth. 5. 39. to the *overcoming evil with good*, Rom. 12. 21. Is this becoming the professed Mortification of a Christian, and the Patience of the Saints?

A *Second* way is, When Justice is delayed, baffled, or perverted through Bribery, Perjury, Faction, respect of Persons, and various Arts. I need not tell you how damnable a Crime any thing of this Nature is; it has been thought against the very Law of Nations to Poyson a Fountain, of which even an Enemy was to drink: What must it be then to corrupt the Laws, which are the very Fountains and Springs of Political Life? To corrupt the Laws, and make them the Instruments of Oppression and Wrong, which should be our great Security and Relief, is a Sacrilege next that of Heresie, which prophanes and perverts the Word of God, and turns the food of Life into Poyson. In a word nothing is more glorious and



more wholesome to a Nation, than the due Administration of Justice, nothing more fatal than the perversion of it: Justice is the great Ligament of Human Society, the Security of the Rich, and Protection of the Poor; the Encouragement of Vertue, Industry, and Trade, the Terror of Wickedness, Contention, and Ambition; and in one word, the Sinews of Government, the Beauty of Peace, and the Support of the Prince's Throne, being that which charms the Discontents, and eases the Burdens, to which the happiest People are sometimes or other subject. May God ever bless this Nation with able and upright Ministers of Justice, Men whose Hearts are set upon the Work of God, the rooting out Wickedness, the countenancing and encouraging Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth: Men of inflexible Integrity, not to be warped from the strict Rule of the Law by the Frowns or Favour of Princes at any time, the Noise and Clamour of the People, or the Importunities and Violence of Parties and Factions, or any Inordinate Lust, Men finally Watchful and zealous to repress the Injustice of others within the Sphere of their Authority. That the Righteous may re-  
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joyce, the Insolence of Wicked Men being curbed; according to that of Solomon Prov. 29. 2. *When the Righteous are in authority the People rejoyce, but when the wicked beareth rule the People mourn.* I have now gone through those several Particulars of the Duty in the Text, which I judged most pertinent to be insisted on, and must be forced, I cannot say to conclude, but break off with a few words upon the two remaining Heads.

*Secondly,* The next thing that follows in the Text, is the Diligence and Industry necessary to the preserving a Conscience void of Offence; *Herein do I exercise my self:* to become a Saint here, and an Angel hereafter, is not the Work of a few oscitant Wishes, a crude and unconcocted Faith, or a *Laodicean* luke-warm Indifference: No, no, we have Hardships to undergo, Difficulties to surmount, Enemies to conquer; and 'tis not a lazy Religion, 'tis not a lifeless and half-formed Resolution that will be able to effect this; all the vigour of our Minds is to be bent this way, this ought to take up our thoughts, and employ our time, this ought to be the great care, the great study, and the great business

finels of Life ; *herein do I Exercise my self*: And since I do not know of any thing that does more violently oppose the discharge of our Duty towards God and Man than Contention and Luxury, 'tis against these especially I must beseech and charge you to watch, and strive, and fortifie your selves; these are the Parents of Atheism and Irreligion in some, of Spiritual Pride, Hypocrisie, and Lukewarmness in others; and in a word, of all those Crimes which either disturbs Church or State, or plunge wretched Sinners in Misery and Perdition. Now to extinguish Contention, nothing will contribute more effectually than frequent and serious Reflections on the Guilt and Mischiefs of it, a thorough perswasion of the Emptiness and Uncertainty of all the things of this World, Honour, Power, Preferments, Riches; for let our Pretences be what they will, 'tis the thirst and ambition of Worldly things that kindles both our publick and Private Contentions, *James 4. 1. Whence come Wars and Fightings among you, come they not from hence, even of your lusts that war in your Members?* And lastly, a true Notion of Religion, that it consists not in Disputes and Controversies in Opini-  
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ons and Speculations in Forms or Fancies, but in Devotion, Faith, Justice, Charity, Humility, Purity, *in the keeping a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Man.* A true sense, I say, and frequent reflection on these things, the guilt and mischief of Contention, the vanity of Worldly things, and the nature and design of Christianity would soon put an end to our Divisions; 'twould make us meek and teachable, humble and mortified, and intent upon the great design and business of Life, the Glory of God, and the good of Man; and this would banish the very names of Schism and Faction, revive the Zeal and recover the Unity of Primitive Christianity.

Next to Contention, Luxury is the most irreconcilable Enemy to Religion or the discharge of a good Conscience; this defeats all our great Principles, supplants all wise Resolutions, and by degrees extinguishes in us the very desires of Righteousness and Glory. The proper Remedies of this are Spiritual Pleasure and the belief of a Judgment to come: The former will make us disdain Sensuality and Softness, and the latter dread it; the one will increase our Zeal and Fervor,

Fervor, the other our Caution ; and both together will render us stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the works of God. To contribute to this all I can, now I will,

*Thirdly, Close this whole Discourse with the Motive or Ground of St. Paul's Diligence and Industry, a Judgment to come. I have no time to assert the truth of a Judgment to come, to vindicate the Sharpness and Eternity of the Sufferings of the Damned, against all the Cavils of Sinners, or to draw to the Life a Land-skip of Canaan, and open to you a Scene of Heaven, I must only put you in mind, That this is the day of the Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God, wherein God without any respect of Persons, shall render to every man according to his works, glory, honour, and peace upon every one that doth good, but indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, Rom. 2. This will be the last Audit, wherein all Accounts will be rightly stated, the last Tribunal, where all Causes will be impartially tried; here the Sophistry of Sinners will be fully answered, here all Controversies will be infallibly decided, here all the hidden works*



works of Darkness will be brought to light, here the secret Springs and true Principles of Humane Actions will be unmasked, from all specious Pretences, decyphered, exposed, damned; here Schism will be distinguished from a well-grounded Separation, Rebellion from necessary Defence, Bigottry and Pharisaism from Christian Zeal. Here in one word, no Error will find shelter or protection, unless it be in the invincible Ignorance and Sincerity of its Author. Ah, what a Folly will the Cunning of worldly Men then appear! what Sottishness and Stupidity the Wit of the profane! what Poverty the Wealth of him *who lays up Treasure for himself, but is not rich towards God!* what Cruelty the Luxury of the Voluptuary, and what damnable Wickedness the boundless Ambition of Princes, the Corruption of Persons in great Trust, and the Restlessness, Turbulency, and Revenge of Men of all Ranks and Fortunes. Why then do Men flatter themselves that their sins pass here concealed or unpunished, when but a moment and the last Judgment will overtake them? Why do they pride themselves in the Treasures of Wickedness, and applaud them-

themselves in the pleasures of Sin, when but a few moments and the Day of Judgment will turn all these into Gall and Wormwood, Horror and Pain? Ah, how little reason has Man to please himself in the success of Wickedness, when but a few Minutes and the Day of Judgment will convince him of his fatal Mistake, and shew him that there is no Misfortune, no Misery so dreadful as success in Sin! Ah, how ought these thoughts, if we be indeed Christians, if the Word be mingled with Faith, affect and pierce our hearts! how ought they to startle and awaken us! how ought they to fill our Souls with horror and detestation for all Sin! *When Paul reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled, Acts 24. 25.* This, in a word, is an Article of our Faith, which if we would ponder it often and seriously, would enlighten our Minds, purify our Hearts, establish and strengthen us in the Obedience of the Gospel, vanquish all the Difficulties and Discouragements of Vertue, and enable us with *St. Paul, to keep a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Man.* God of his Mercy grant us Grace so to meditate a Judgment to come, that it may

may have this Influence and Operation upon us, that so from the Tryals and Temptations of this World we may pass into the Rest and Glory of Eternity.

A C T S

The

## The Fourth Sermon.

### ACTS x. 4.

*Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up  
for a Memorial before God.*

**S**OME observing what Bloud and Ruine, what Luxury and Avarice fills almost all places in Christendom, have been sometimes tempted to question, whether Christianity had wrought any effect in the World answerable to those glorious Eulogies bestowed upon it. *The Power of God*, Rom. i. 16. *And the Wisdom of God*, Ephes. i. 8. 'Tis true indeed, Idolatry is well nigh banished the World, at least the reformed World: But since Men sacrifice (though not to *Baal* or *Moloch*) to Ambition and Cruelty, (though not to *Ashtaroth* and *Mammon* yet ) to Lust and Covetousness, they are to be judged not to have quitted but exchanged their Idols: 'Tis true, there are vast numbers abroad and at home, who dedicate themselves to the Service of the now known God; among  
these

these we may find Religion abroad (if it be to be found) here in the pompous Ceremonies, or Processions and Festivals, there in the Antick habits and Self-denying dresses of Monks and Nuns : At home in Volumes of Controversies and Superstitious Separations. But since 'tis apparent how much Evil the one and the other served to disguise- and how little good they have been able to produce; if this were all the Fruits of Christian Religion, I should be yet to seek what it had brought forth answerable to the glorious Prophecies relating to it, or to the great Characters of it.

But in this Assembly, and the Occasion of it, I meet with a very satisfactory Answer to this Objection, against the Vertue and Efficacy of the Christian Religion; here we may behold one, and that no Spurious but true and natural Offspring of the Christian Faith, and such a one as doth abundantly vindicate the Glory and Reputation of it: I mean Charity; Such a Charity, as for the Largeness of its Bounty and the Prudence of its Regulation, may become the Wealth and Grandeur, I may add the Majesty of its Founders, and the Wisdom and Piety of its Governours; a Charity which

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in one word may become the Excellence and the Power of the Christian Faith.

That this Charity so happily begun, so piously and prosperously conducted hitherto, may not only be preserved but daily encreased, is the End and Business of this Solemnity; to which, that I may contribute what I can, I shall propose to your Imitation an example which for you to equal can be no disparagement, because approved of God and Angels. To outdo will be a great Honour and Advantage, but to fall short of it, a Reproach and Scandal; great and wealthy Citizens of the best governed City, by a *Roman*, by a Souldier, Christians by a Pagan, or at best but a Profelyte of Judaism outdone in Devotion and Charity; It must not be, no I hope better things of you, things that accompany your Salvation, the Honour and Reputation of our Religion, and the Prosperity and Glory of this great and opulent City; for I have reason to expect that nothing else will be the reward of a pious and generous Charity, when I consider with what a glorious Applause, with what miraculous favour it was crowned in *Cornelius*; An Angel being dispatched from Heaven to let him know

know how welcome his Sacrifices were there, and to what Glory and Immortality they had recommended him: *Thy Prayers and thine Alms, &c.* In these Words we have two parts, *Cornelius* his Character, and God's Approbation: 1<sup>st</sup>, *Cornelius* his Character consisting of two eminent Vertues, Devotion and Charity, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms*: 2<sup>dly</sup>, God's Approbation, *are come up for a Memorial before God*: 1<sup>st</sup>, Of his Devotion; Devotion is an affection of Mind derived from the Contemplation of the lovely Perfections of God, from a lively consideration of his bounty and goodness towards us, and a just sense of our dependance upon him: It expresses it self in the perfumes of Praise, and Thanksgiving, the Flames of Love, the Pantings and Breathings of Desire, the resignation of Faith, and Religious dependance, the Importunities of humble Fears and the Vigor and Activity of an unfeigned Zeal and growing Hope: In this grace or rather eminence or height of Religious perfection *Cornelius* excelled: *He was a devout Man, one that feared God with all his house, and prayed to God always*, Vers. 2. There are two things so considerable in this

Character, that though I hasten to the main Design, yet I cannot pass them without making some remark upon them: *He prayed to God always.* This was true Devotion, as steady and constant as it was sincere and fervent; the effect not of a heated Imagination, or a short-liv'd Passion, but of well-rooted Principles, and of a purified and exalted Mind: The next thing remarkable is, *He feared God with all his House:* How lovely how charming is a bright Example? and how active and invincible is a devout Zeal of God? 'twas it seems in *Cornelius* like light that could not be confined, but breaking out shed a vital Influence round about it? But to find now all this in a Pagan, 'tis not a little surprizing; Devotion clad in Steel, hands armed with Instruments of Death lifted up continually in Prayers; Valour govern'd and supported too by the humble fear of an invisible Power; A devout Souldier, a devout *Roman*; I read of the Apostles being *continually in the Temple blessing and praising God*, Luke 24. But this was a Man of a different Light and Profession too. I read of *Moses* and *Joshua* whose Devotion was equal to their valour, who owed their victories

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no less to their Prayers than Arms, but this was owing to extraordinary Inspirations and miraculous Appearances of God ; what was it then that produced such a Devotion in *Cornelius*, his command was mean, that is plain ; as to his Birth and Fortune, whatever it was, it was not considerable enough to be recorded. As to his Religion, That he was a Pagan is plain, and Interpreters seem to me rather to take it for granted than proved that he was a Profelyte of the Gates : The Vision of *St. Peter*, and the Resentment which the Christians of the Circumcision express'd of his conversing with him, *Acts* 11. 3. give no great countenance to it, but be it so, all that we can infer from hence or from any other ground amounts to thus much ; that he was instructed in natural Religion, believed one God the maker of Heaven and Earth, and lookt upon him as the Rewarder of all those that diligently seek him : This was the Creed that produced the wonderful Fruits in the Text ; and now give me leave to put you in mind how reasonable it is you should exceed, at least equal this Man in your Devotion, for whether Religion be the result of gratitude or hope,

your both Obligations and Expectations from the God of Heaven are infinitely above his: Your Wealth and Dignity does much exceed that of a *Centurion*, a Commander of a hundred Men, and that gained not by your Bloud and Hazard, but by the easie and delightful Arts of Peace: But what is more, you are as much above him in Spiritual as in Temporal Mercies; the Love of God to mankind in giving his Son to die for them was unknown to him, but revealed, demonstrated, and inculcated to you; whatever grace he might enjoy, you may much more; for though God be the God not only of the *Jew* once, and Christian now, but also of the *Gentile*, no doubt but that the measure of Gospel-Grace much exceeds what ever God vouchsafed either *Jew* or *Pagan*. Lastly, what opinion *Cornelius* had of a Life to come we know not, because we cannot tell what proofs or evidences of it were vouchsafed him, but we are sure they could not be as clear nor as strong as those you enjoy, who behold Life and Immortality brought to light through the Gospel, and to whom God has given an assurance of a Judgment to come, by the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead;



dead ; it might therefore be reasonably expected, that your Devotion should as much exceed his as your Obligations and your Hopes do ; and yet if it do but equal it, what Blessings will you not procure to your selves and to this City ? What Judgments may not a fervent and united Devotion of so many avert from our dear Country ? What Mercies may it not obtain for it ? What influence would not so many illustrious Examples have upon the Nation ? to what degree might this not advance a general Reformation ? Ah ! were but you your selves inflamed with a devout Love, how soon would this fire catch the breast of your Families, and from thence pass into the Neighbourhood round about, and so Religion be diffus'd and transmitted from this City to all the rest of the Nation, like vital heat and warmth from the Heart into all the parts of the Body. But by this time I believe you begin to wonder what I mean by stopping so long upon Devotion, e're I enter upon the great Subject of the Day, that is Charity ; I had these two Reasons to do so, 1<sup>st</sup>. Because Devotion is an excellent Introduction to Charity, there is a close connexion and dependance between both :

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They both proceed from a just Sense of what we receive from and owe to God, and are proper testimonies of our gratitude to him: By Devotion, we sacrifice our selves, by Charity our substance to God; and it cannot reasonably be imagin'd, that he who has given himself to God, should deny him a Portion of the Fruits of his Flocks and Herds: Therefore St. *John* argued closely, when he concluded that breast to be destitute of the Love of God, which was so of compassion for his Neighbour: *Who so hath this World's Goods, and seeth his Brother has need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?* 1 Joh. 3. 17.

2ly, Because I would have the Charity I shall perswade you to, no Counterfeit or Adulterate, but a true Christian Vertue, I would not have it want that worth and value which Religion must stamp upon it: I must confesse rather than the Tears of Orphans should not be wiped off; rather than the hungry and the naked should not be fed and cloath'd; rather than the groans and cries of the distressed should not be calm'd, I should be content, that generosity or  
good

good nature, nay that Vanity and Ostentation should spur Men on to bounty and liberality; I would rather the most excellent Works should be owing to the very worst of Principles, even to Ambition and Faction, than the needy and the miserable should be abandoned; but yet I cannot be of the Opinion of some *St. Austin* takes notice of, who thought their Alms might protect their sins, and their Charity towards Man shelter their impiety towards God, even though they persisted in it. I know very well that Charity without Devotion, is like bounty without charity, of which *St. Paul* says, *1 Cor. 13. 3. Though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

This was another reason why I have said so much of Devotion, It was out of a Zeal I had, that no Man's Charity might ever lose its reward; that no Man's Alms might prove as fruitless to him, as that Wealth and Treasure which foolish *Indians* bestow upon the Dead, and bury in their Graves, but that your Charity may be such as that of *Cornelius*, whose memorial may go up before God, and procure you Angels for your attendants, and Heaven for your reward.

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This is that I am now to speak to.  
2dly, The second part of *Cornelius* his Character is Charity, *Thine Alms*: And here 'tis observable, that as Devotion so Charity too was at its height in him, as it is said of him, that he prayed always, so is it said of him too, That *he gave much Alms*; much not only with respect to his rank and fortune, or with respect to his Religion, being at most but a Profelyte of the Gates, but much even considered in it self, for it is said he gave much Alms to the People, which must imply an enlarged generous bounty; to give Alms might have argued a Sense of Religion, but to give much, zeal and fervency; to give Alms might have argued in him Humanity and the Tenderness of Nature; but to give much Alms a heavenly Disposition and greatness of Mind, made so by Faith: Something he might have done for Reputation, something out of compliance and decency, but to give much Alms in a Person of his circumstances was an unquestionable proof of Sincerity and Perfection too: I will not go about to compare this *Roman* with *Abraham* the Friend of God, or *David* the Man after God's own Heart, lest you should think him

him raised above your Imitation, and so I should beget in you not a Desire but a Despair of equalling him: No, I will chuse rather to consider. 1<sup>st</sup>. By what Grace. 2<sup>dly</sup>, By what Principles he was moved and acted, that the same or a higher may move you, or leave you inexcusable: 1<sup>st</sup>. If we enquire after the Grace vouchsafed *Cornelius*, I doubt not to affirm that he was assisted by the Holy Spirit. For though he were a Gentile in the Flesh, and uncircumcised, and in that respect, though not in regard to his Works, an Alien from the Common-wealth of *Israel*, and a Stranger from the Covenants of Promise, yet was he not without God, nor without Hope in the World: God is the God of the Gentile as well as of the Jew, and St. Paul has taught us: *Rom. 2. 28, 29. That a Conformity to the Law of Nature, that is; of right Reason, was that which did render the Gentile a Jew inwardly, and did constitute that circumcision, which is of the Heart in the Spirit, and not in the Letter, whose praise is not of Men but of God: And since we know that the Holy Spirit is the Spring and Source of Sanctification, I dare not derive it in Cornelius from any other* Princi-



Principle; but must attribute his Devotion and Charity to the same Spirit, to which I would that of *Abraham* before Circumcision, or that of *Job* who was no less a Stranger than *Cornelius* from the *Jewish* Covenant; What needs farther Arguments, has not God himself told us that he had sanctified him: *V. 15. What God hath cleansed that call not thou common.* But I am more solicitous in this Matter than my design requires, for if we should suppose *Cornelius* to have been acted by no Supernatural principle; then what a shame and scandal will it be to us, if *Christianity* cannot carry us as far as *Paganism* did him, if the concurring and co-operating Grace of God, cannot raise our Charity to that pitch which Reason did his? But if universal Grace were the Principle and Origin of these Vertues in *Cornelius*, then can we have no excuse for any degrees of Uncharitableness; for this seems as general and as ready a one as Reason, and no *Man* forfeits the one but by abusing and violating the other: But if indeed we think the Vertue of this Centurion owing to special Grace, and that working in such a manner, that he that has it, can never fall short, and he that wants

wants it never come up to his Vertue : This I confels , would furnish any Man with an excuse for Impiety and Inhumanity ; but because it would do so, this must be an erroneous and false Opinion : but finally let the Grace that moved *Cornelius* be what it will, we have, or we may have the same, or a much greater ; for we are within that Covenant which contains the Dispensation of the Riches of the Divine Grace ; and 'tis one of the great and precious Promises of the Gospel, *If we ask we shall receive, if we seek we shall find, if we knock it shall be opened to us*, that is, as appears from the Verse following, *we shall have the Holy Spirit given us.*

Our next Inquiry must be what the Principles were, which inspired *Cornelius* with such a boundless Charity, and here I find many. For the *Gentiles* sometimes lookt upon Charity as an Office of Humanity, and thought him a Stranger to Human Nature, and an Enemy to Human Society, whose breast was not touch'd with Tenderness and Compassion for the Miseries and Distresses of those who were partakers of the same Nature, and Members of the same Body politick, sometimes they lookt upon it as something

thing Lovely and full of Honour, and I do not find that any thing raised the Reputation of a *Roman* higher than either a Contempt of Wealth, or Beneficence and Liberality. Whence *Salust* seems to equal the Glory of *Cesar's* Bounty to that of *Cato's* Vertue and Severity; sometimes again they lookt upon Charity as an act of Religion, a Sacrifice more acceptable to God than the Fat of Lambs, or the Bloud of Bulls. And that for two Reasons: 1<sup>st</sup>. Because it was the noblest Imitation of God, who being himself the Universal Patron, and Benefactor of *Mankind*; they did reasonably infer that there was no worship more grateful to him than Beneficence and Liberality.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Because they did believe Mankind the Offspring, the Family of God and consequently that the Poor being entitled as well as the Rich to his Fatherly Love, they concluded, that nothing could be more natural or reasonable than to be kind to them out of Honour and Gratitude to him. And after all this, 'tis no wonder if they expected that the Divine Providence should punish that Uncharitableness, which implied Inhumanity and Irreligion, Barbarity

barity towards Man and Ingratitude towards God, and reward that Charity which had a Value and Dignity stamped upon it by the quite contrary Affections; hence it is that we find *Job* reflecting on his good Deeds with an unspeakable Satisfaction, and establishing upon them as on a firm Foundation fair and flourishing Hopes, *Job* 29. 13.

*The Blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the Widows heart to sing for Joy: And then I said, v. 18. I shall die in my Nest, and I shall multiply my Days as the Sand, and that in that state of Opulency and Honour, no doubt, which he there describes, v. 19, 20. My Root was spread out by the Waters, and the Dew lay all night upon my Branch. My Glory was fresh in me, and my Bow was renewed in my hand: And hence it was, that when Job was oppressed and overwhelmed by Calamities Eliphaz knew not what to impute them to, more probably than to Uncharitableness: Job 22. 7. Thou hast not given Water to the Weary to drink, and thou hast withholden Bread from the Hungry. This and all the rest I could confirm by full and numerous Testimonies from Heathen Writers (if I thought it necessary*

necessary ) these Notions of the Heathens derived from evident Light of Nature, as they do evince the Obligations to Charity Universal and Indispensable, so do they demonstrate the Guilt of Uncharitableness to be very great and provoking, the Evidence, Necessity and excellent Tendency of any Law, as they bespeak the Importance of it, so do they wonderfully aggravate the Violation of it, all which suggest to us a Truth, which I doubt is not so well considered as it ought ; namely, that though our Alms must be voluntary and free-will Offerings; yet are we bound by the strongest Ties to make such; nothing less than Damnation being the Punishment of such who do not make these Oblations freely and cheerfully: For we cannot forget, I am sure we never ought, that the Sentence, *Matth. 25. 42. Go ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, was pronounced on those who had not succoured the Miserable; *I was an hungry and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger and ye took me not in; naked and ye cloathed me not; sick and in prison and ye visited me not: What? shall he that does not feed the*  
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Hungry be as surely damned as he that robs the rich Orphan or Widow? he that does not cloath the naked, as he that strips and fleeces his Neighbour by fraud or violence? he that does not hospitably receive the Stranger, as he that circumvents him perfidiously, or bears him down by his power or interest? he that does not visit the Imprisoned, as he that casts him wrongfully in there? in a word is the same Hell prepared for Uncharitableness, for the meer denial of Relief and Succour, that is for Oppression and Injustice? Will the Same Vengeance, the same everlasting Vengeance pursue those that abandon the Miserable, which will pursue those that make Men so? Good God! Do the Rich and Covetous believe this to be Gospel? Do those wretched Creatures, who sink under the Weight and Burthen of their Fortunes, and yet suffer others to perish for want of some Fragments and Parings of it, do these believe this to be the Word of God? It cannot be.

Now that we have seen what Motives wrought upon *Cornelius* as a Pagan, under the Dispensation of natural Religion, need I consider him as a Profelyte of the Gates, and examine what farther Inducements

duancements to Charity he might meet with in the Law and the Prophets, with which we may presume him not unacquainted: I think it needs not; thus much only may be said, that the Law of God under Judaism fortified the Law of Nature, and Revelation added Light and Strength to Reason; and the Suffrages of *Moses* and the Prophets gave a New Authority to the Gentile Law-givers and Philosophers: I cannot find that Judaism added any new Motive to Charity, which our Centurion might not have been acquainted with before; but this I may say, that it could not but give him a great deal of light as to the Measures and Degrees of it: For though it be notorious that the *Pythagorean* Charity came up for a little while even to a Community of Goods, and higher it could not grow; yet this was a rare Case, and made neither any strong nor general Impression upon the Minds of the Pagan World: The same thing was practised by the *Essens* among the *Jews*, but not as a Principle of the Jewish Religion, but a particular Tenet of their own Sect, or Institution. Thus far indeed the Mosaick Law did not advance, but yet it made very plentiful Provisions  
for

for the Poor : God when he gave the Land of *Canaan* in possession, reserved to himself as the great Lord and Proprietor, some certain Acknowledgements or Quit-Rents, to be paid him in the Persons of the Poor ; such were the gleanings of the Vintage, and of the Fields and Tithes of the third Year, the Year of release, &c. and Besides this, he did forbid Usury as repugnant to Charity ; for generally none borrowed, but such as were forc'd to it by their Necessities and Wants ; and therefore were to be reliev'd by Alms, not oppressed by Usury : He commanded to lend, and to give, and that chearfully and bountifully, according to the Exigencies and Needs of a Brother, and all this under the Sanctions of the severest Curses, or greatest Blessings. I might alledge innumerable places both out of the Law and the Prophets, to confirm and illustrate all this, but I'll content myself with one, containing an Injunction of voluntary Charity, *Deut. 15. 7. If there be among you a poor Man of one of thy Brethren within any of thy Gates in thy Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor Brother, but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto*  
K 2 *him ;*

him; and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth, beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart; saying, *The Seventh Year, the Year of release is at hand, and if thy Eye be evil against thy poor Brother and thou givest him nothing and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be a sin unto thee; thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him, because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy Works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto; for the Poor shall never cease out of the Land: therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy Brother, to the Poor and to the Needy in thy Land; and this was to be extended also to the Stranger according to Levit. 25. 35. And if thy Brother be waxen poor and fallen into decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him, yea though he be a Stranger or a Sojourner, that he may live with thee:* This being the Spirit of Judaism in reference to the Point before us, we may rationally conceive that the Precepts and Examples of the Old Testament added new strength and force to those Motives to Charity, with which the Light of Nature had furnished

Cornelius

*nelius* : But I'll pursue this enquiry no further ; whatever were the Inducements, whatever the Motives to *Cornelius* his liberality, he has been the occasion of furnishing us with such a one, that nothing can resist but rank infidelity. For is it possible for that Man to deny Alms or give them with a sparing Hand, and a grudging Mind, who believes that *Cornelius's* were rewarded after such an extraordinary manner, by miraculous Demonstrations of God's Favour, by the Embassy of an Angel, by the Attendance of the chief of the Apostles, nay by the Descent and Residence of the Holy Ghost upon him and his Family and Friends, and not the Revelation only but assurance of a glorious Eternity : He I say that believes this, unless he believes that the Charity of a Christian is less acceptable to God than that of a Pagan, cannot I think chuse but thirst after opportunities of Charity, and take as much pleasure in scattering as ever he did in gathering, in doing good as ever he did in growing rich : Let us therefore consider,

The *second* thing contained in my Text, that is, God's Approbation of *Cornelius* his Deportment, or the Influence



ence of Prayers and Alms, *They are come up for a Memorial before God* : And now I will confine my Thoughts no longer to *Cornelius*, this being an inseparable effect of a pious Charity, that it ascends up for a Memorial before God ; the meaning of which is, not only that God beholds and observes a pious Charity, but that he beholds and observes it with Complacency and Satisfaction ; nor this only, but also that he remembers it for ever, and will reward it with Blessings becoming the Munificence and Majesty of God, of a Righteous and Good God ? What an Incouragement is this to you who convey your Alms secretly into the Treasury of God ? that Cloud which your Humility and Modesty scatters about it, adds a new Grace and Lustre to it : *And your Heavenly Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly*, Mat. 6 5. What an Encouragement is this to you whose good Works, are so Eminent that they cannot chuse but glitter and shine in the Eyes of the World ? (I hope there are some such here) that you erect your selves not only Monuments before *Men*, this were a poor Matter, but before *God* Monuments more glorious than Statues,

Statues, and Triumphal Arches, or any whatsoever crouching Slavery or mercenary Flattery can raise, your Deeds shall stand registered in the Book of Life, which infinitely outlasts the Book of Fame; nay they shall be engraven in the very Memory of God, where neither Time nor Eternity shall be ever able to efface them.

*Lastly,* What an Encouragement is this to you, who by a yearly Supply feed that Stream of Bounty in the Hospitals, which would otherwise soon grow dry, and be exhausted, being overcharged with numbers of the Miserable, and liable, as you have heard, to Fires and other sad Accidents? your Alms will certainly go up as a Memorial before God: The Angels of these little Ones, who always behold the Face of God, while they give an account of their Charge, will do so of your Charity too; the Blessings and Praises of such as are delivered from Misery while they celebrate the Divine Goodness, put him in mind of yours too; for you Act what he inspires, you imitate in your little Sphere that Divine Bounty that feeds the World, and pities and succours the Wants and Miseries of it. I'll leave you to ima-

gine with what satisfaction God must behold Works of this Nature ; for Alms to go up as a Memorial before God, does not import meerly that they are known to God, or that he beholds them, for so he does all the Works of Art and Nature, but that he beholds them with a peculiar Complacency and delight ; and indeed since he who dwelleth in Heaven will humble himself to behold what is done upon Earth, what is there that can more justly merit his regard, than these standing Monuments of Charity, for what is there upon Earth more glorious, more great than these kind of Works, wherein Wisdom and Piety, Vigilance and Charity, Humility and Zeal meet in all their Beauty and Lustre ? what is more magnificent than the Bounty ? what more taking than the Order of these Foundations ? God that walked among the Trees of the Garden in *Paradise*, *Gen. 3.* may be reasonably supposed to vouchsafe his Presence as readily here amongst these Monuments of a pious Charity : Here, were Alms sowed, as it were and planted by excellent Persons deceased, and watered by the living to grow up and multiply into all the Fruits

Fruits that are necessary to relieve the Wants, or cure the Diseases of the Miserable : here, where Charity, like the great River of *Paradise* divides it self into various Streams, and leaves no part of our *Eden* perfectly barren and miserable. For here the Bounty of Earth like that of Heaven, when it rained down *Manna*, is fitted to every taste, to all the Necessities of his Creatures : Here the Diseases of the Body, there the Vices of the Mind, find a Cure ; here Poverty finds Relief, and Youth an excellent Education, such an Education as may enable them to requite the Charity of their Country, by being many of them Blessings and Ornaments of it : Can any one doubt now whether God beholds these Works with delight ? or if he do so, whether he will not reward them with all those Blessings which are the natural effects of a Divine Favour ? Here I might plunge my self in a vast Ocean of Matter, I might even lose my self in that crowd of Mercies with which God crowns Charity ; How almost innumerable, how great and magnificent are the Promises of God made to this Vertue : Promises Temporal and Promises Spiritual, I will cull out



out two or three from the vast store of the Old and New Testament. Isa. 58. 10, 11. *If thou draw out thy Soul unto the hungry and satisfie the afflicted Soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darknes be as the noon day, and the Lord shall be thy reward, and guide thee continually, and satisfie thy Soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered Garden, and like a Spring whose waters never fail : And Proverbs 3. Honour the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of thine encrease, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, thy presses shall burst out with new wine : So saith our Blessed Lord, Mat. 6. 19, 20. Lay not up for your selves treasures upon Earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and steal, but rather lay up for your selves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust do corrupt, nor can Thieves break through and Steal : But what can be added to what St. Paul teaches us, 1 Tim. 6. or our Saviour Mat. 25. who make eternal Life the Reward of Charity : what comfort must these Promises give us in these times of War and Danger; 'tis a Reflection full of delight, that this City has so often been*  
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the Sanctuary and Refuge of the Miserable and Needy, that it is a never failing Spring of Bounty and Liberality; and I hope will never grow weary of being so; when I think on this, I cannot but perswade my self, that the Prayers and Praises of those vast numbers that have been, and are yearly relieved and succoured by her, will drown the Cry of that Wickedness and Impiety, which cannot be denied to be in her too; That the Zeal a great many express for promoting good Works amongst us, will make an Atonement for that Looseness and Atheism which reigns amongst us too. In a word, when I call to mind that ten Righteous Persons would have rescued *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* from destruction, I have no reason to doubt but that the Righteousness, the Mercy and the Bounty of so many thousands I hope in this City, will render it not only safe but always rich and powerful enough to be the Sanctuary of its distressed Friends, and the Envy and Terror of its Enemies; And as Charity is a publick Comfort at this day, so what consolation must it fill the *Minds* of charitable *Men* with, in the day of sickness and death? Oh! how pleasant will be  
your

your reflection then on those works to which eternal Life you know is promised? Oh! what a Satisfaction must it be to you then, when you are bidding adieu to this World, that you have laid up your treasure in Heaven, made a good provision for the time to come, and furnished our Lord and Master with Arguments enough for your Absolution and Justification in the great Day of Judgment? I have nothing more to add, but to put you in mind, that the Motives in the Old and New Testament to Charity are such, that nothing can blunt the force of them, but what will certainly damn the *Man* that is guilty of it: namely Infidelity and Luxury none whom God has enabled to do good and to communicate ( and the number of these blessed be God is very great in this City ) will refuse to do so, but such who either have no faith for the Promises of God made to Alms, or such whose indulgence to Pride and vanity, riot and excess, leaves no room for Mercy or Liberality to the Distressed. Ah! I wonder not, if Christ be as deaf to their cries in the Day of Judgment, as they are now to their poor Brethren in the Day of their Calamity; if he  
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send them away with a *depart ye Cursed*  
who send away their afflicted Brethren,  
naked and destitute, abandoning shall I  
say or condemning them to lasting mi-  
sery, with a scornful look and relentless  
heart: Ah! *may God of his infinite Mer-*  
*cy deliver every one that hears me this*  
*day from this Guilt and from this Sentence.*

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The

## The Fifth Sermon.

HEBR. xii. 1.

*Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the Race that is set before us.*

**T**O confront Atheism with the Resurrection of Jesus, and Immorality with the Lives of Saints, demonstrating the Power of God in the one, and of Faith in the other, is a way of arguing, which if it do not Reclaim the Infidel and Sinner, if it do not utterly silence the Objections of the one against the Truth, and of the other against the Possibility of Religion, must yet needs ruffle and disturb the Conscience of both, and fill it with an uneasy Shame and Fear; but how much more must this way of Reasoning prevail where ever there are any Principles of Natural Religion, or any Seeds of Ingenuity

ty and Probity; where-ever there is but a *Form of Godliness* or the least Disposition to the Power of it. This is the Method the Apostle here observes; he demonstrates the Force and Virtue of Faith by the insuperable Courage and Patience of such in all Ages as were acted and supported by it: And then well knowing, that the Belief of another Life was established upon a brighter Revelation and fuller Evidence than God had ever yet vouchsafed the World, addressing himself to Christians, as Men who would be ashamed to be out-done by Jew or Gentile, or shrink at such Tryals as they had triumphed over, he concludes in the words of my Text, *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, &c.*

These words contain three Parts:

I. *A Duty.*

II. *Directions for the successful discharge of it.*

III. *Motives and Inforcements to it.*

The Duty is, *To run the Race that is set before us.*

The Direction consists of Three Rules:

I. That we must lay aside every weight; but especially, 2ly, *The sin that doth so easily*



*easily beset us. 3ly, That we must run with patience.*

The *Motives* and *Inforcements* are partly expressed in these words, *Seeing we are compassed about with such a Cloud of Witnesses* ; partly implied and involved in the Metaphorical Description of our Duty, *The Race that is set before us* ; for this intimates a Crown to be the Reward of him, who so runs as to obtain.

First of the *Duty*: The Race of the Primitive Christians consisted especially in the Propagating the Kingdom of Jesus, and securing their own by sufferings and Blood. And that this is the Race my Text immediately relates to, is plain ; it being nothing else but an Exhortation founded on the Tryals and Tortures in the former *Chapter*, and reinforced by the Example of Jesus in this, *Who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, and despised the Shame.* But if we take this Exhortation in the utmost latitude we may, and suppose it address'd to all Christians in general, then our Race will consist in *doing the good which God hath appointed us, and especially in surmounting whatever difficulty or opposition we may encounter in the pursuit of it.*

1. In *doing Good*: The great design of Christianity is to multiply our Obligations and Encouragements, and to raise and enlarge our Capacities of doing good. The Holy Scripture was inspired and written that the *Man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work*, and the Holy Spirit is communicated, to relieve the Weaknesses and Indispositions of our Natures, and enable us to act the great things which that prescribes. Illumination fills the Mind of Man with a just comprehension of the Dignity of his Nature, and the great ends of his Creation. Purification sets him at Liberty to pursue them, and fires the Heart with a holy Ardour and Zeal to do so: And Faith strengthens and fortifies him against the contradiction of Sinners and Temptations of the Body. Doing good then is undoubtedly that wherein the Christian Race consists. But it must be

2ly, *That Good* which God hath appointed us. We must neither contract nor enlarge the Notion of doing good beyond those Bounds which God hath set us. We must not enlarge it, by placing Religion in those Works which Prejudice or Prepossession, Fancy or

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Faction, Lust or Passion, not God prescribes: Nor may we break in upon the Rights, or invade the Offices of others, out of a design of doing good. Purity of Intention will hardly expiate Rashness and Presumption; nor will any Good attain'd, compensate the Mischiefs flowing from an Example of so much Injustice and Confusion; nor is it therefore to be wondred at, if such a one meet with the Punishment of *Uzza*, not the Crown of *St. Paul*.

And as we must not inlarge, so we must not *contract* the Notion of doing Good. To which end I must remark to you, That it consists not only, 1. in rescuing the Wretched and Unfortunate from Temporal, or, 2. the Fool and Sinner from Eternal Evil, *i. e.* in rooting out Vice and Errour, and propagating Truth and Vertue, concerning both which there can be no doubt; but also, 3<sup>ly</sup>, In the due Discharge of the Duties of Secular Stations or Callings. The Reason of this is plain; they are all, from the highest to the lowest, in a true and proper sense, appointed of God; they do minister to excellent ends, and proceed from, and are conducted by excellent Principles, *Faith in God, and Conformity to his*  
*provi-*

*Providence*; and then no wonder if Humility, Faith, and Purity of Intention, transmute Civil into Religious Actions, as the *Elixir of Adepts* is said to do inferior Metals into Gold. Hence it is that the *subduing Kingdoms*, and *working Righteousness* which in the *Idiom* of the *Old Testament*, signifies the protecting and delivering the People of God, the *waxing valiant in fight*, and *putting to flight the Armies of the Aliens*, are recorded by the Apostle *Hebr. 11.* not only as the Heroick Exploits of *Gideon*, and *Baruch*, *Jephtha*, and *Sampson*, and *David*, but as truly and properly Acts of Faith, as the Sacrifice of *Abel* or *Abraham*, the Ark of *Noah*, or the Flight of *Moses*. And hence *Eph. 6.* the Industry and Faithfulness of Servants is interpreted, as truly Religion towards God, as Service towards Man, and this upon a ground that Ministers Encouragement to Men of all Conditions and Professions, knowing that *whatsoever good a Man doth, the same he shall receive of God, whether he be bond or free* : all this put together, as it furnishes us with a just notion of the Christian Race, so does it with a just one of Christianity it self : He derogates from it, who forms any

other *Idea* of it than this, That it is a most effectual and comprehensive Design of advancing all the good Mankind is capable of. As it has its Vertues which adorn the Man, so has it those too which adorn the Prince, the General, the Judge, and so downwards. As it hath its Vertues which perfect and accomplish *Human Nature*, so has it those too which cement and support *Civil Society*: It is so far from consisting in Modes and Forms, in Heats and Enthusiasm, that it consists not in Mortifications it self alone; *laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us*, is in my Text but a Qualification or Preparation to the *running the Race set before us*. Whoever then confines Religion to Private and Solitary Piety, I mean to such a one as is useless to the World, dissolves the Vigour, and Impoverishes the Generosity of the Christian Spirit. Godliness and Sobriety without Righteousness, would make but a maimed and imperfect Religion; for it is not the Design of Religion to resolve Societies and Kingdoms into *Hermits* and *Monks*, but to purify and raise them, and make the *Kingdoms of the World* the *Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*.

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This is a Design so glorious, so benign and gracious, that one would think, whoever engages in it, should find every thing easie and yielding, propitious and favourable to him. But alas! if he consider the Corruption of Nature, the Malice of Hell, and Degeneracy of the World, he has reason to expect a very formidable Opposition. In the Conquest of which consists.

The Third and most considerable Part of the Christian Race. *My Son*, said *Jesus* the Son of *Syrach*, *Ecclesiasticus* the 2d Chapter, and verses 1, 2. *if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation; set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not hast in time of trouble.* Which, if we should suppose him to speak Prophetically, will amount to thus much, Whoever thou art who resolvest to enter the Lists of Christianity, and *run the Race that is set before thee*, dream not of a Cheap and easie Victory, thou shalt be encountered with violent Opposition from within and from without. Sloth, or Self-preservation, will solícite thee to ease and rest, why shouldst thou *be righteous over much*, and destroy thy self? why shouldst thou exchange the calm and security of

a quiet private Piety, for the storms and troubles in which thy Zeal and Rashness will imbroil thee? Diffidence or Distrust in God, Impatience under thy own Fortune, or Envy of anothers, will suggest to thee many more effectual and compendious ways to Honour and Interest, than a conscientious, *i. e.* a tame and toilsome discharge of Duty. Sensuality, or at least Lukewarmness, will endeavour to perswade, that it is a Supream point of Wisdom to reconcile the Hopes of another World with the pleasures and Enjoyments of this; to which if thou listen thou art undone. For this is a Perswasion which shoots a dead Palsie through the very Sinews of Zeal, clips the Wings, and takes down the Sails of Charity. Nor shalt thou be less distressed from without, than from within; the Squadrons of Hell will beset thee round, and Enemies will fall on from every Quarter; there will be *Sadducees* and *Atheists* that will attack thy Faith, and tear up, if they can, thy Righteousness by the Roots: There will be *Scribes* and *Pharisees* who will blast thy good Actions, and aggravate thy Infirmities, either out of hatred to the Communion thou art off, or which is worse, a  
close

close and secret Aversion to all Religion. There will not be wanting *Hobbists* and *Herodians*, *Machivillians*, *Craftsmen*, and innumerable others, who will assault thy Religion consisting in Zeal and Charity; some as Folly, others as a Scandal and Offence; some as Enemy to *Cæsar*, and others as Enemy to Trade. For an humble, modest, and a frugal Religion, will not fail of being Traduced, as menacing the Trade as much as the Sin of a Nation, and as impairing the Revenues, while it prunes the Luxury of a State. Reformation, though it disturb a vicious World, as the Angel did *Bethesda's* Water, only to work Cures, yet shall it never escape the Rallery and Reflections, the small and great Shot of the Loose and Immoral; and whatever Measure it take, whether it revive old Constitutions, or recommend new, shall ever be branded as Design and Hypocrisie, by all such as thrive and grow fat by Transgressing the Laws of God and Man. Nay more yet, there will not be wanting advocates of Vice, or Enemies to Vertue, in thy own Train and Family who will dehort thee from all expensive and hazardous Sacrifices, and endeavour to divert thee, as *St. Peter*

would have done our Saviour, from the Paths which lead to Tryals or Sufferings, to *Gethsemane* or *Golgotha*. Finally to compleat the Politicks of Hell, thou shalt find the World divided into Factions, Religious and Civil, who will stamp Vice on the most glorious Actions, and Honour and Vertue on Extravagancies and Debaucheries, who will persecute the Truth of God as Heresie and Novelty, and stickle for the Teners, *i. e.* the Interests of their Parties, as for the Fundamentals of Faith, or Precepts of the Decalogue. And after all, God himself sometimes will withdraw, and seem to abandon and give thee up to the Will of wicked Men, so that thou shalt be ready to cry out with his beloved Son, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Here is the Tryal, here is the Patience of the Saints. These and many more are the Difficulties thou art to conquer, if thou wilt *so run as to obtain*; and therefore prepare thy self by Mortification and Discipline, and fortifie thy Soul by the wisest Advice, and the most powerful Incouragements, for thou shalt have need of all.

This minds me of my Second General Direction, for the Discharge of this Duty,



Duty, consisting of Three Rules. I begin with the first, that is, *to lay aside every weight*, every corrupt Affection, which like a weight would clog and retard us in our Race.

This Advice contains several important Truths, as First, That whatever the Disorder or Depravation of Nature be, which we derive from our first Parents, our Destruction is from our selves; and those Reluctancies and Aversions for Righteousness, to which we owe our Ruine, are rather contracted, than Original. 'Tis true, there is a Law in the Body which wars against the Law of the Mind; but then it is as true, that there is a Law in the Mind, which wars against the Law of the Body. The Language of the Body is indeed more soft and insinuating, but that of the Mind more authoritative and awfull. The Body, like *Esau*, is the First-born; for as *Job* observes, *Man is born like a wild-Asses Colt*; but the Mind, like *Jacob*, comes into the World with a better Title by Divine designation, and a Capacity which soon defeats it of its usurped Possession of the Birth-right. The Objects finally of the Body are present and sensible; yet to the Soul, the Glory  
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and Eternity of its Objects make amends for their distance and futurity, and Faith Supplies the place of Vision; for Faith is the *Substance of things hoped for, the Evidence of things not seen*, Hebr. 11. 1. So that 'tis evident, the Scale of Victory is not turned on the side of the Body against the Mind, till false Principles have supplanted the Authority of the one, and Indulgence and ill Customs increased and fortified the Propensions of the other to worldly and sensible things. I have remarkt this, that none of us may go about to remove the Guilt of our Ruin from our selves on our first Parents, or God, that none may think we have sufficiently discharged our Duty by accusing our Nature, or excused our Vices by Arraigning our Frailty. This calls to mind a

Second Truth contained in this Rule, namely, That no Sin is invincible, that none is so deeply rooted in us, either by Nature or Custom, but it may be extirpated. This is an Assertion you will easily admit, if you consider by what glorious Instruments the Conversion of Man is wrought, the Spirit of God, and the Word of God, *i. e.* the Wisdom and the Power of God. Or if you consider the Description of it in Holy Scripture; it  
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is called *the Divine Nature, the New Creature, the Image of God, the Life of Faith, a being transformed from Glory to Glory, the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*, and such like. What degrees of Perfection all this may import, I enquire not; 'tis plain it can imply nothing less than a Purification from all Fithiness of Flesh and Spirit, and a thorough Sanctification of Spirit, Soul and Body. Nor is this a matter of meer Speculation; the Converts of the first Times were living Demonstrations of this Truth; and their daily Actions were nothing else but the glorious Effects of an intire Victory, not over the Weakest only, but most Obstinate of their Sins. All this inculcates this one plain Lesson, That no Man must think to shelter his Negligence and Luke-warmness, or any Darling Lust, under the pretence of an insuperable Infirmary; or that by owning himself to be but Man, he is excused from being a Christian. The truth is, if Christianity did consist in a Quarrel, only with our Sins, not a Conquest of them, it would be nothing else but a Circulation of Sins and Follies; for Regret and Remorse, which doth only disturb, not reform, may be reckoned amongst the Infirmities  
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of Man, and that Repentance which brings not forth Fruit, is it self to be repented of amongst our other Faults. For,

Thirdly, The last Truth I'll observe to you from this Rule, is, That Spiritual Liberty is the beginning of Perfection; that the first step towards doing Well, is ceasing to do Evil: that the Christian must make the first Experiment of his Zeal upon himself; that Reformation and Charity must begin at home: not only that his Attempts of doing good, may have in them their proper Luster and Majesty, their just Authority and Influence; but indeed that he may be qualified and capacitated for making any: for how weak and unsuccessful must his Endeavours be, whilst some wretched Lust takes up his time, employs the Vigour of his Soul, and alienates his Affection from every thing that is truly Great or Good. Will the Unclean deny the Importunities of his Lust, to satisfie those of his Duty? will the Covetous impoverish himself, (so he styles giving Alms,) to support others in Laziness; and yet his Heap of Treasure, like heaps of Soil and Dung, is good for nothing till it is scattered abroad? Will the Proud stoop to the humble

humble Offices which our Crucified Saviour did ? Will the soft or the Ambitious run those Hazards, or indure those Hardships which are generally unavoidable in carrying on any considerable Good ? or will the Factionous cross the Interest of his Party to promote that of his God, I mean that of Religion in General ? This abundantly demonstrates how inconsistent every sinful Affection is with Success in our Christian Race, and consequently how necessary the Advice of my Text is, That we should put it off as a burthen or weight. Nor is this true only of this or that particular Sin, but of all in general, and therefore we must put off *every weight*. *Strive*, said our blessed Saviour, *to enter in at the strait Gate ; for strait is the Gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.* All our vigour, all our strength, assisted by the Spirit of God, will be little enough to open this Way, and storm Heaven. Ah ! what can we expect from affections divided between God and Mammon, or any other Lust ? from Strengths scattered and dispersed in pursuit of Vice as well as Vertue ; and these deserted and abandoned by the Spirit of  
God ;

God; for the *Holy Spirit of Discipline* will fly Deceit, and will not abide when Iniquity cometh in, Wild. 1.

But though all Sin in general obstruct the Christian in his Race, and defeat him of his Crown, yet none so fatally as the beloved one: And therefore 'tis against *this*, against the *sin that easily begets us*, that the Apostle in his second Rule awakens all our Jealousie, and Summons all our Courage; this being the Sin in which especially lies the strength of Satan, and in the Conquest of it the first, and I think I may add the greatest Difficulty of Christianity.

To illustrate therefore this Advice of the Apostle, I'll first shew what it is, and then secondly, how to cure it.

First, What it is; As in the Humours of the Body, so in the Vices of the Mind, there is one Predominant, which is this, ἀμαρτία ἐν μέλει αἰῶνος, it has an Ascendant over us, and leads and governs us; it is in the Body of Sin, what the Heart is in the Body of our Nature; it begins to live first, and dies last; and whilst it lives it communicates Life and Spirit to the whole Body of Sin, and when it dies, the Body of Sin expires with it. It is the Sin to which our Constitu-



stitution leads, our Circumstances betray, and Custom enslaves us; the Sin to which, not our Vertues only, but Vices too, lower their Topsail and submit; the Sin, which when we would impose upon God and our Consciences, we excuse and disguise with all imaginable Artifice and Sophistry; but when we are sincere with both, we oppose first and conquer last. 'Tis in a word, the Sin which Reigns and Rules in the *Unregenerate*, and too often Alarms and Disturbs, ah, that I could say no more, the *Regenerate*! Having thus fully discovered what this Sin is, without vexing and torturing the Text by Criticisms, I'll now proceed secondly, to shew you how to conquer it.

First, Endeavour to possess your Souls with a true Notion of Sin in General, but especially of this beloved one in Particular; Falshood and Folly, Levity and Inconstancy, Cowardice and Ingratitude, and all that is base constitute the very Essence of Sin. As to the Effects of it, it dishonours, and as much as in it lies dethrones God, disturbs and embroyles Human Society, depraves Nature, perverts the true ends of Life; and for all these Reasons will one day bring

bring down all the Storms of Eternal Vengeance upon the Guilty and impenitent Soul.

This is a true Notion of Sin in general, and let nothing ever tempt us to softer Thoughts of our *beloved* Sin: The same baseness gives it being, and though its Effects sometimes may not be so injurious, as those of some other Sins, either to the Honour of Religion, or the Interest of Man, yet they will be no less fatal to *thee*. This Sin is like some Diseases, which though they seem contemptible in themselves, are always deadly to some Families and Constitutions: But can that be a little Sin, which creates in us the greatest Trouble, Threatens us with the greatest Danger, and Intangles us in the greatest Difficulties? Is that a little Sin which has so often overthrown our Solemn Vows and Resolutions, robbed us of our Peace and Hopes, and fill'd our Souls with Remorse and Shame? Is that a Sin to be despised which the weightiest Reasons, the clearest Convictions, and warmest Impressions of the Spirit do often fail to conquer? Is that finally a Sin to be shelter'd and excused which bewailed, condemned, renounced, detested, baffled, broken, routed,

ed, often rallies and renews the fight, and recovers for a time its former Dignity and Authority? Certainly, did we Morning and Evening seriously reflect upon the strength and mischiefs of this our favourite Sin, of which each Man ought to have a Catalogue by him, we should, whenever tempted to it, tremble and grow pale at the Temptation, and fly back with the horror of *Joseph, How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* But after we have done all this, we must take as much pains to preserve, as we did to imprint this Notion in our Souls; we must not suffer our Reason to vary with our Pulse, and our Resolutions to change with our Company, Fortune, Temper, Humour; otherwise we shall soon pull down in an Hour of Gaiety, what we built up in many sober ones; and a fit of Pleasure and Jollity will deprive us in a moment of the Fruit of many Prayers, reflections and Meditations. And because we are very liable to this, therefore,

Secondly, We must frequently renew our Resolutions against it: And these Resolutions must *first* be levelled, not only against this Sin, but all Appearances of and Approaches to it. What is Cru-

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elty in Princes, is Piety in Penitents; the Expression of our Displeasure must light, not only on the Criminal it self, but on all its Friends and Relatives. We must deal with this Sin as *Israel* was obliged to do with Idols, not only reduce the Idol it self to Ashes, and bury it in a Stream of Repentant Tears, but cut down its Groves, dig up its Altars, slay its Priests, and deface whatever might tend to preserve or revive the memory of it.

*Secondly*, These Resolutions must be as well fitted to all Occasions and Circumstances as possibly we can; we must consider what Arts, what Arms this Sin is wont to make use of, where our Nature or our Vertue is weakest, or most exposed to the Assaults of the Enemy; we must in one word, neither be ignorant of any Frailty of our own, nor any wile of the Devil, and then our Resolutions must be so formed, as to obviate each. Is my Temper Rash and Precipitate, Light and Inconstant? I must resolve to correct it by the Awe of the Divine Presence; by Meditations on Death and Judgment. Is it slow, heavy and unapprehensive? I must resolve to awaken it by Retirement and Prayer; by entering often into an impartial view of my own state;



state; by Conversation, if I can find it, that hath warmth and spirit in it; by the most pathetick portions of Holy Writ, and by a frequent Recollection of all those Truths which have Edge and Point in them, or at least have so to me. Is this Sin wont to dart its Infection through the Eye? Is it wont to wound or defile us by the Ear? we must block up these Avenues of Death and Damnation; we must guard the Soul, as God did Paradise with the flaming Sword of an Angel; with what awful Vertue and inflamed Zeal, that Temptations may fly from before us. Thus must we, in a word, oppose Art against Art, and Force against Force, and in our Spiritual Warfare imitate the Wisdom of the Children of this World, who count it unpardonable Error to be often imposed on by the same Artifice, or betrayed by the same Methods. After all, you must bind these Resolutions on your Souls, by Prayer and Sacraments, and this one particular Consideration, *That nothing less than the*

*Conquest of this darling Sin can gain a Christian true Peace and Liberty. While we retain a Sin that Rivals God in our Affection, neither our Obedience*



nor Assurance can be sincere or constant ; we can have no pleasure in our Reflection on our selves, nor confidence in our addresses to God. No Man is so wicked, as to be inclined to all sins, nor so foolish, as to quit none ; 'tis therefore the quitting the *predominant Sin*, which is the best proof of our Integrity ; with *others*, we part, as with Civil Acquaintances, when the Visit is done ; but with *these*, as with Confidants and Friends ; or in the Language of our Saviour, with our *right Hands*, or our *right Eyes*. But when this is done, our Freedom and Pleasure will compensate our Trouble ; and Hope, and Joy, reward our Mortification. But then we must take care that we finish, as well as we begin and compleat that Christian Race in patience, which we began in Mortification. Which brings me to my third Rule, That we must run with *Patience*.

This Rule will contain two or three Things : 1. A Supposition or Insinuation that such as stand may fall ; that such as run may faint and grow weary, and so forfeit their Crown.

All the Promises which God makes his People of his Presence and Protection

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on in their Dangers and Tryals, are designed to minister Incouragement to the Humble and the Watchful, and must not be perverted to nourish Confidence and Security, or to defeat that Humility, Vigilance, and Circumspection which the Spirit of God in Scripture endeavours, by repeated Exhortations, to beget in every Christian. Our Saviour indeed, when he tells his Disciples, *Matth. 24. 24. That there shall arise false Christs and false Prophets; and then adds, That they shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very Elect;* seems plainly to imply, that it was not possible; but then without flying to the distinction between the *Faithful* and *Elect*, made use of Indeed by *St. Austin*, and some others of the Fathers, whether sufficiently founded in Scripture, or no, I determine not; without flying, I say, to this distinction, this Text may easily be reconciled with those which suppose the possibility of a Righteous Man's Revolt from Vertue; for it is very obvious to any one, that our Saviour speaks not here of the Perseverance of this or that particular Person, but of the Continuance or Preservation of the

Christian Church, asserting no more here than what he had done before, *That the Gates of Hell should not prevail against it.* 'Tis true indeed, some of the Ancients thought that there was a Height or Eminence of Holiness, which when Man had arrived at, he was raised above the possibility of falling. I examine not what Countenance this Opinion has from Holy Scripture, because 'tis, if an Errour, I think at least an harmless one; for the more holy, the more humble; the nearer to Perfection, the more fervent and watchful. But I'll not intangle my self in this Matter, since all I intend to build upon this Doctrine, is only *that* Caution and Circumspection, which the Scripture every where exhorts Christians to, and particularly here in my Text.

Now the Advice of Patience referring to *that* Opposition which the Christian is to Encounter from within and from without, we may reasonably conceive it to inculcate these two things: 1. That we should watch carefully over our selves. 2. That we should bear the shock, and on-set of the World with Constancy and Courage.

*First,*

*First*, That we should Watch, &c. Since he that stands may fall, let no Man presume too soon of an intire Conquest, nor grow secure or Careless, as if past the reach of Danger. When we have put off every old Sin, the Seeds of new ones will remain till we put off the Body; we must therefore continue our Gaurd and Watch, and use as much diligence to keep the Enemy under, as we did at first to subdue it. It is a wise Example St. Paul hath set us, who continued the same Discipline over the Body which he began with; *I keep under the Body, and bring it in subjection, least at any time when I preach to others, I myself may become a Cast-away.* It often happens in the Christian as it doth in Secular Wars, that he loses the Fruit of a dear bought Victory, who makes too much hast to enjoy it. If therefore you will be safe, you must not be secure; be not too soon confident of a Reconciliati- on with God, nor too hasty to calm the Sorrows, and still the Agonies of an afflicted Conscience; the more lasting the Grief is, the more intire and compleat will be the Victory; the more wakefull and timorous thy Soul is, the more firm will be thy Peace. In this



case too forward Joy is like a too forward Spring, whose early Blossoms seldom come to Maturity and Perfection. Nay, I must put you in mind, That when the Season of this Fruit is come. *i. e.* when Tribulation has wrought Patience, Patience Experience, Experience Hope, Hope raised high on the Wings of Love, Hope inebriated by the Joy of the Holy Ghost, we must even then follow the Advice of the Psalmist, *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoyce before him with trembling.* Even then our Zeal must increas with our Hope, and our Circumspection and Humility with our Spiritual Pleasure; even then, as if our Work and Duty did increas with our Strength and Capacity, as if the difficultest Task of our Christianity was still behind, or all that we have hitherto done would amount to nothing, if we did not hold out with Patience and Courage to the Goal, We must imitate the great Apostle of the Gentiles, *Brethren, I count not my self to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling*



of God which is in Christ Jesus, Phil. 3.  
13, 14.

And you will see this very reasonable, if you consider what this Rule suggests in the *second* place, namely, That we are to meet with much Opposition from the World, which we must bear manfully; nor will these Trials have an end, but with our Lives; nay, often the sharpest are reserved, like Martyrdom, for our last Moments: Therefore the Scripture every where inculcates, That we should not look on Christianity as a state of Sensuality; or project to our selves the Pleasure and the Honour, the Ease and Interest of Life; but Hardships and Labour, Watching, Contention and War: whence it was our Lord did advise his Auditors, that before they followed him they should consider what they undertook, as wise Builders do their Fund before they begin to build, or wise Princes their Strength and Provision before they ingage in a War. 'Tis true, the taking up the Cross in a literal Sence, was a qualification for Discipleship, more immediately requisite in those Ages; but 'tis as true, that in bigger or less proportion, the words of our Lord are applicable to all, *If a Man will not take*  
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*up his Cross and follow me, he cannot be my Disciple.* Whoever will imitate the Life of the blessed Jesus, *who went about doing good*, must resolve to content himself with his own Integrity, to despise Censure, to digest the Ingratitude of Man, and vanquish and weather those Enmities which a steady adherence to Truth and Justice, and much more a Zeal for reclaiming Vice, or reviving decayed Religion, will often create him; he must shrink at no Toil or Hardship which an excellent Action will put him to, nor must he be discouraged by those Baffles or Disappointments which he will often suffer in his most Charitable Designs. In one word, he must always have in his Thoughts the Words of our blessed Saviour, *In the world you shall have Tribulation, but in me ye shall have Peace; but be of good comfort, I have overcome the World*: i. e. he must propose to himself no Peace but from Religion; nor any Comfort from the World, but from the Conquest of it. This, you'll say is a hard Lesson, who can hear it? Not so hard neither; for where Affliction dwells, there the Spirit of God and Glory dwells too. Trials refine and raise the Faith and Courage of a true Christian, and the over-

overflowings of holy Pleasure, that Joy unspeakable and full of Glory in *St. Peter*, do ever and anon compensate the Toils and Difficulties of his Warfare; and a gracious God has provided Supports and Encouragements proportionable to his necessities; which is the last thing I am to speak to.

3dly. The Motives to this Duty. The first of which is, *We are encompassed with a Cloud of Witnesses*: without considering whether this Expression do suppose departed Saints Spectators and Judges of our Race here below, what I am to remark from it is, That the Apostle lays before us their Examples as undeniable Proof of this Truth, that their does no *Temptation befall us, but what is common to men*, and what has been conquer'd by them too. The *Apostle* has demonstrated this from the Old Testament, and we may demonstrate it from the New. The Primitive Times were as bright for their Vertue, as their Miracles, and made as many Proselytes by the one as by the other: How triumphant did then the Strength of Faith, the Ardours of Zeal, and the Tenderness of Charity appear. 'Twas as much difficulty then to restrain the Flights of Faith,  
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and Transports of Love within the Bounds of Christian Prudence, as to enkindle them now to any degrees of Decency. Then indeed the Just did live by Faith, they acknowledged themselves to be Strangers, and Pilgrims upon Earth, and sought no Country but a Heavenly one; then indeed they followed after Righteousness with that Resolution and Impetuosity, which shewed, that they did really believe they contended for a Crown and Kingdom: But now, alas! our Love of this World vies with their Contempt of it, and our Contempt of Heaven, with their Passion for it: Now carnal Prudence eats up our Zeal; Faction consumes our Charity; the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life deforms our Mortification; dispirits our Devotion; and every little blast of Opposition overthrows our Faith. The Atheist digs up the Foundations, and the Loose and Immoral demolish the Superstructures; the one denies the Truth, and the other the Power of our Christian Faith; in one word, we have degenerated to that degree, that there needs as many Miracles to revive and restore the Life and Spirit of Religion among us, as ever God has wrought to preserve the publick Profession



sion of it; and were there not a few Names among us dear to Heaven, I persuade my self, God could no more endure our Vices, than we their Reformation; and do you think now that in the Day of the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, when he shall render to every Man according to his works, it will suffice to present him with Excuses, instead of good Works; to urge the Temptation of the World and the Frailties of Nature instead of conquering them to plead the Hypocrisie of Pretenders, and the Immorality of this or that Ecclesiastick, that is, the Vices of the Bad, instead of imitating the Vertues of the Good; Alas, a Cloud of Witnesses will be produced to baffle this Empty Sophistry, and refute these poor Shifts; and then those Examples which could not here enkindle and excite your Vertue will shame and reproach your Vice, and what could not reform, will then serve to condemn you. But never may this prove the Portion of any one here, but that Crown which is my second Motive.

Had there been any thing more dazzling upon Earth than Royalty, the Spirit of God would have described the Felicity of Heaven by it; but since, there

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is not, he is content to call the Reward of Righteousness a Crown; the State of the Glorified a Kingdom, and themselves Kings and Priests to God for ever: But let not this Metaphor serve to debase our Notion of that State. This is no Kingdom of secret Fears and splendid Troubles, of wakeful Cares, and glittering Dangers: No, 'tis a Kingdom of Philosophy and Love, of Knowledge and Righteousness, of Beauty and Perfection, of Joy and Triumph, of Tranquility and Rest; not bred like that of the Ambitious, sometimes either by Satiety, Disappointments, or an Increase of Years, but resulting purely from Security and Extasie. In one word, As God is his own Heaven, so next to that, which results from the Injoyment of him, every one of the Blessed will be a Kingdom to himself, being an Image of God drawn in little. And yet after all this, how little is it of Heaven that we yet know; It's Joys, for ought I know, are as boundless as the Perfections of God from whence they flow. Ages may run by, while we each day survey new Scenes of Wonders, and taste each day new Worlds of Pleasures. Ah! I cannot wonder that such as were  
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possessed with the Belief and Expectation of this State, were willing to quit *Mesopotamia* or an *Egypt* for an Heaven, Nets and Fisher-Boats for Crowns and Kingdoms, Trifles for Treasure, Moments for an Eternity. Ah! did not Lust fully the Idea of Heaven; did not some degree of Infidelity undermine our Belief of it, what Dangers, what Difficulties should we not desire in order to secure it? Did doing Good expose us to as many Reproaches from without, as doing Evil doth from within? were the state of the Righteous as uneasy as that of the Wicked, who are *as the troubled Sea* when it cannot rest; yet what would not a Man do, what would he not suffer, were his Soul fired with the Belief and Hopes of such a Heaven? How much more fearless and active would Zeal be than Ambition? how much more wakeful and indefatigable Charity than Lust or Covetousness, Revenge or Envy, (Ah! with what Transport would Man pour out his Time, his Treasure, his Strength on this one Design of Doing Good) had he but a Heaven always in his Eye?

Let us then, that we may neither shrink, nor tire through any Difficulties  
or

or Hazards which may attend us in this Race of doing Good, look up daily unto Jesus, till our Faith be turned into Vision; and make Heaven our Meditation, till God make it our Reward: To whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The

## The Sixth Sermon.

P S A L M cxii. 7.

*He shall not be afraid of evil tidings,  
his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*

**T**His *Psalms* presents us with the *Character* and *Blessings* of a righteous Man : His *Blessings*, according to the stile of the old Testament, which we must exalt by the Spirit of the New, are Riches, Victory, long Life, a flourishing Posterity, an honourable and lasting Memory. His *Character* is made up of a Constellation of Vertues : First, the Fear of God, as the Fountain and Principle of all the rest ; then a delight in his Commandments, Discretion, Justice, Mercy, Beneficence, Bounty ; and lastly, Faith, or Confidence in God, which unites his *Character* and his *Blessings* together : For as it is describ'd in my Text, I can hardly tell whether it partakes more of the one or the other, whether I ought to call it the Vertue or

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the Happiness of the Righteous Man; *He shall not be afraid, &c.* In handling these words, I'll observe this Method.

1. I'll make some Reflection upon the commonness and unavoidableness of Evil, which is supposed in my Text, the *righteous Man* not being exempt from *evil Tidings*.

2. I'll show you that the Favour and Patronage of God is the only Support and Comfort of Man against Evil. This is that which fortifies the righteous Man in my Text against Evil Tidings, his heart is *fixed*, trusting in the Lord.

3. I'll conclude with an Exhortation to Righteousness, as that alone which can entitle us to the Favour of God, and warrant our Confidence in him.

1. Of the commonness and unavoidableness of evil. Were there no sin to merit evil, no God, or none concern'd to inflict it, yet considering the state and nature of this World, a wise man could not promise himself much from it. All things without us, are mixt, empty, uncertain, transitory, and we our selves consist of mortal Bodies, and mutable Minds, Diseases infect the one, and Passions the other, so that error



roure and ignorance, baffles and disappointments, losses, changes, sickness, death, reign every where, disquiet and disturb every state. But if we carry our thoughts a little further, if we consider what variety of Evils is necessary to exercise and train up Vertue; to reform Man, and vindicate the Sanctity and Justice of God: If we look upon the World as the Theatre of God and Man, on which the *Wise Man* too often acts his Mistakes and Follies, the *Fool* and *Sinner* his Lust, Rage, Avarice, Ambition, Subtilty, Cruelty, Hypocrisy, Bigottry, and the like. And God delights to display his Wisdom, Power and Goodness, in the various Scenes of Loving-kindness, Righteousness and Judgment, *Jer.* 9. If, I say, we consider all this, we shall be apt to wonder, why Evils are not more numerous and more grievous than they are. Man when full and at ease, when standing on high, on heaps of Honours and Offices, Dignities and Preferments, is a proud, insolent, vain, sensual, unthinking thing; how many Disgraces, Mortifications, Revolutions, are, necessary to make this poor Creature know God and himself, to make him humble, modest, wise, and vertu-

ous; a lively Image of this we have in the People of *Israel*, *Isa. 2. 7, 8. Their land is full of silver and Gold, neither is there any end of their treasure; their land also is full of Horses, neither is there any end of their Chariots.* And what was the natural result of this, even what follows in the next words of the Prophet, *Their Land also is full of idols, they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.* And this was a wantonness not to be cured, but by Afflictions; nor could any thing effectually convince them of the Vanity of Stocks and Stones, or the need they stood in of the living and true God, but Calamities and Distresses. And as these are often necessary to convert a Sinner, so are they no less necessary to train up a Convert, and perfect even a Righteous Man: even these have their Dross, which cannot be purg'd but with fire; there is *Remisness* in themselves, *Connivance* and *Compliance* with the sins of others; there is their *Carnal Diffidence* and *Worldly Politicks*; ah too too remote all from the Simplicity, the Zeal and Faith of a Christian. In one word, good Men too often adhere too much to the World, and have too much fondness for the Interest and

and Ease of the Body, and are far from being sufficiently mortified to the *Designs* and *Arts* of the World, and therefore God finds himself obliged, ever and anon, to imbitter their outward Comforts, to shatter those false Props they are apt to lean on, to imbroid and entangle them in their Councils, that they may learn to cleave to him with a more perfect heart, and to live as becomes the Followers of Jesus, not by subtilty or sight, but Faith. For these and a great many other reasons Judgment, as St. Peter observeth, doth sometimes *begin at the House of God*: and if so, what shall be the end of *those that obey not the Gospel*, if the righteous scarcely be saved, if they escape as through the fire, *where shall the sinner and ungodly appear*? A thought which ought very sensibly to affect our Souls this day. I am afraid, pray God it be without ground, that God may take up the same Complaint against this Nation now, which he did against Judea once, *Ezek. 5. 6. She hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her.* I am afraid, in despite of all those Mercies God hath heaped upon us, in defiance of those ad-

vantages in Church and State we enjoy above our neighbouring Nations, if we be compared with them, we shall be found to equal the Luxury and Intemperance of one, the Pride and Vanity of another, to exceed the worst in Lusts and Wantonness; and to compleat all, 'tis doubted, whether we have not outdone our selves in Inconstancy, Ingratitude, Falshood, Hypocrisy, Faction, and Divisions. May this be only a vain, tho' well-meaning Jealousie? But if it be true, then I am sure, should God extinguish our Lust and Wantonness, by Plague and Pestilence, should he reduce our Pride and Luxury by Poverty and Famine, should he put an end to our Divisions, as he did once to *Jerusalem's* by a Civil and Foreign Sword ranging from North to South, should he finally suffer Persecutions not to be parallell'd in former Ages, to tear up by the Roots our Holy Religion, our Religion so scandalously betrayed, and abandoned by our Heats and Animosities, so vilely dishonoured and blasphemed by Sins and Immoralities too too National, all that we should have to say, would be, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy Judgments.* This is what our sins have deserved; this is what our contempt

tempt of Mercies hath provoked thee to.  
I have made these Reflections on the commonness and unavoidableness of Evil for these Reasons.

1. That if God bless us with such an Issue of Affairs, as we have this day earnestly prayed for, our Gratitude may be enlarged, and the goodness of God, which we have so little ground to pretend to, may even melt us into humble Joys, holy Thanks, and devout Praises.

2. To dispose us to modest and rational Expectations; to pass through crouds of Evils on the right hand and on the left, like *Israel* through the Red Sea, when the Water stood on heaps on both sides, and not to be touch'd by them, seems to me the greater Miracle of the two: To hope therefore for an uninterrupted Success, to be willing to bear no Inconveniences, to meet with no Disappointments, to grow discontented and mutinous if we be not presently plac'd out of the very reach of Evil, this is a petulance, a wantonness, that becomes not *Sinners*, shall I say, no, not *Men*, not *Mortals*.

Lastly, These Reflections serve to teach us that, if Evils, and great ones too, be one time or other unavoidable, then 'tis the Wisdom and Duty of all,



by an holy and upright Life, or by Repentance and Reformation, to secure their Interest in the favour of God, which is my second General.

2. This alone is the Comfort and Support of Man against Evils.

I need not prove that he can have no other. For what can he confide in, his Treasure? This may soon be exhausted, or it may awaken the Avarice and Ambition of a powerful Enemy, as *Hezekiah's* did the King of *Babylon's*, and so instead of being a Defence, prove the occasion of his Ruin. Can he confide in Power? alas he knows that when this is grown too big to fall by any other hands, it generally falls by its own. Can he finally confide in worldly Wisdom? alas a thousand unexpected Accidents, and unobserved latent Circumstances, cross and frustrate this, and render the *Achitophels* of this World not only unfortunate, but often contemptible too. *Let not therefore the Wise Man glory in his Wisdom, neither let the Mighty Man glory in his Might; let not the Rich Man glory in his Riches: but let him that Glorieth, Glory in this, that he understands and knoweth God, that he is the Lord who executeth loving kind-*

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ness and judgment upon the Earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord, Jer. 9. 23, 24. To promote which frame of Spirit, so acceptable to God, and advantageous to you, be pleased to consider these three or four things.

1. He who is assured of the Favour of God, is free from the worst of Evils.

2. God is able to support and reward his Servants.

3. He's able to prevent the Evil which threatens them, or deliver them out of those they are in.

4. He'll certainly do what is best for them.

1. He who is assured of the Favour and Patronage of God, is thereby freed from the worst and greatest of Evils. To be abandoned here on Earth by the Divine Spirit, to be given up to sin and a reprobate sence, and after all to be cast into *Hell*, a Region of inextinguishable Flames; these are Evils which make men truly and eternally miserable; but 'tis our comfort these are Evils which only God can Inflict; only an angry God can make us truly miserable. As to Man, what Zeba and Zalmunna said of Jether, Judg. 8. 21. *As is the man so is his strength*; may be applied to all the Sons of Men,

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his strength is trifling, and therefore his anger too. He's arm'd like peevish *Wasps* with *Buz* and little *Stings*, not like God with *Thunder* and fatal *Bolts*; and therefore his slight Wounds can only trouble and disquiet, not ruin us. For what can he do? His *Tongue* can wound our *Reputation*, or his Arm our *Body*; he can plunder and rifle us of our *Estate* and *Fortune*; He can deprive us of our *Liberty*, and of *Life* it self; not to take notice that he can do none of these things unless God permit. What doth all this amount to? *He can wound our Reputation: i. e.* he can fight with the Air; for Reputation is but popular Breath: he can fasten imaginary wounds upon an imaginary Man, for Reputation is generally nothing else but the picture of a Man drawn by the Fancies and Opinions of the Vulgar. *He can rob us of our Estates*; that is, he can clear our way to Heaven of all that Rubbish which doth but trash and clog us in our Journey. *He can deprive us of our Liberty*; that is, he can confine us to the happy necessity of entertaining our selves with wise and holy Thoughts, and of being entertained by heaven: Finally, *He can kill the Body*; that is, he can throw down these Mudwalls, which

which will be built up of Marble; he can deliver us from the Troubles and Evils of this Life, and send us the speediest way into the Joys and Glories of a better. This is all vain Man can do. For no violence can wound the Soul, no Calumnies can blast our Innocence, or sully our Integrity; what we are, that we shall be, whatever Man represents us, no Persecutions, no Alarms can rob us of the Peace of Conscience, and Joy of the Holy Ghost; no ravenous Hands can seize upon our heavenly Treasure; the Crown of Life is held fast by the right hand of the Almighty, and no force, no ambition can invade it. I will sum up this Argument in the words of our Saviour, *Luke 12. 5. And I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I'll forewarn you whom you shall fear, fear him who after he hath kill'd the body, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, fear ye him.* Were all this thorowly fix'd in the minds of Men, it would be an effectual means to extinguish selfishness, cowardice, and hypocrisy, to awaken a necessary zeal for our Religion and Country, and to revive the honour of our Nation; for no  
Man

Man who believes this will part with his Integrity to preserve or increase his Fortune, or sacrifice the favour of God to the fear of Man, or of any Evil whatever. Especially if he consider,

2ly, That God is able to support and reward his Servants. Now God supports us various ways ; partly by his gracious Promises, partly by dispensing Evils by such degrees, and with such a mixture of good, as not to suffer us to be oppressed and overwhelmed by them; and partly by fortifying us by his Spirit, in proportion to the danger and difficulty of the Conflict he calls us to. What the force and vertue of all this put together is, may be inferred from the Victories and Triumphs of good Men in all ages, over all sorts of afflictions, amidst the Persecutions and Insultings of Enemies, the Ingratitude and Perfidiousness of Friends; in Poverty, Reproach, Imprisonment, Sicknes, and death it self, they have maintain'd their ground, preserved their Integrity, and appeared to all great and illustrious. A good Cause, and a good Conscience, are proof against all Calamities : The Sword of the Spirit, and the Shield of Faith, will sufficiently protect us against all the  
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Darts and Onsets of the Enemy. I do not by all this imagine that the Trials of the righteous Man are void of trouble and affliction, that his Contention is without sweat or toil, his Wounds without smart, or his heart utterly untouch'd by those Passions which harrafs and oppresses others; but only that he's not broken nor dejected like the Sinner and Hypocrite; that he's never destitute wholly of inward Comfort, nor ever casts away his hope in God. Such is the Description the *Psalmist* gives us of his own Faith, or the State of his Soul under Trials: *Nevertheless though I am sometimes afraid, yet put I my Trust in thee. My heart and my flesh faileth me, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Nor can it yet be denied, but that sometimes, such is the strength of Faith, such the transport of Love, such the confidence of Hope such the luxuriancy and joy of the holy Spirit, that the pleasure of a good Man in the midst of his Sufferings, doth infinitely outweigh and exceed his Pain and Sorrow; but this I doubt is but a very rare Case: and therefore God puts us often in mind, that the Afflictions of this present moment, when he calls us to  
them,

them procure for us an eternal weight of glory : and our Saviour when he pronounceth those happy whom the World generally pronounceth miserable, doth it with an eye to their Reward : *Blessed are ye poor for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven : Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh.* Rejoyce and triumph to all Eternity. *Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and persecute you, &c.* Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Good God ! why should we fear that Evil which leads us to such an happy end, or rather why should we call it Evil, which recommends us to God's favour here, and greater degrees of Glory hereafter ? Methinks were we thorowly perswaded of this, our hearts, like the wise man's in *Solomon*, should choose to dwell in the house of mourning, and we should prefer the advantages of afflictions before the slumbers of Peace, the softness and luxury of Wealth, or the false and empty glitterings of worldly power and glory, when destitute of Vertue. But let me not be misunderstood, I have not magnified Sufferings, as if we were to be fond of them when we may with a good Conscience decline them. Whoever throws himself

himself upon Evils, when God points him out a way to escape them, deserts and betrays the Providence of God, forfeits all pretension to Divine assistance, and suffers like a Fool, not a Martyr. St. *Paul* when he wisht his Auditorshis Faith, did not wish them his Bonds too; and St. *Peter*, how warm soever his temper, how bold soever his Faith was, durst not throw himself upon the Waves, without his Master's express Command. Nor have I dwelt so long on the cloudy side of that *Pillar*, under whose Conduct I hope this Nation is this day, as if there were not a bright one too. No; my only design herein was to set the World in a good light before you, to invite you to wise and sober Thoughts, and equally to prepare you for every Fortune; for whoever can bear Adversity with courage and constancy, will enjoy Prosperity with modesty and moderation; he that is not dastardly and dejected under the one, will never be wanton and insolent, or forgetful of God in the other; and he whose Will is resigned up to God, whose Soul is humbly prepared to meet whatever Evil God in his wisdom, justice or goodness shall think fit to lay upon him, is not only best fitted for Success, but hath

hath also the best title to it. Let us therefore pass on to the third Consideration.

3dly, God is able to prevent impending Evils, or disperse the present; to doubt this is an approach towards Atheism: For to call into question God's Omnipotence, or Omniscience, is in effect to call into question his Being, since he cannot be God without both. But if he be Omnipotent and Omniscient, then it plainly follows, *that he doth whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven and in earth; and no thought of his can be hindred.* Nor shall we find it difficult to ascribe this to God, if we consider that he is without beginning, and gives beginning to all things: For from hence must follow these two things.

1. That all the Power and Wisdom scattered through the whole Creation, if it could be combined and united, would bear no proportion to that which is originally and essentially in God, since all created Perfections are only some faint Reflections of the Divine Brightness, some thin sprinklings of his inexhaustible store.

2. That all created Beings depend upon him, and are subject to his Will when therefore he commands, *The stars*

*in*

*in their courses fight against Sisera, and the river Kishon sweeps them away.* Fire, Hail and Vapours, Storms and Tempests, Earthquakes and Inundations, Famine and Plague, Sickness and Death obey his Voice, the hearts of Kings, and the hearts of the Multitude too are in his hands; in vain therefore is Counsel, in vain is Strength against the Lord. He wants no Instruments to destroy, none to save. Thus have I briefly evinced the Omnipotence of God if we consider the Exercise and Administration of it, God commonly governs by fix'd and stated Rules, and effects his Designs by ordinary and usual means. Yet sometimes he takes pleasure in humbling the Proud, and rescuing the Distressed, by extraordinary and unaccountable ways; ways that bespeak God the Contriver of them; ways that are evident Demonstrations of a Divine Power and Wisdom. And as he doth this often by unaccountable ways, so often at very unexpected times too; when the proud man is in the height of success and security; when the humble man hath nothing almost to expect, but a Miracle, nothing to trust to but an act of Omnipotence, then God breaks in with sudden ruin on the one,

O

and



and deliverance to the other? and all this to extort from the World an acknowledgment of his Sovereignty and Providence, and to prevent insolence in the highest Condition, or Despair in the lowest. Need I imprint this on your Minds by Instances; Shall I trace *Joseph* from the Pit in the Wilderness, to the next place to *Pharaoh* on the Throne; *Moses* from his Ark of Bull-rushes to the Ark of the Tabernacle, where he spoke with God face to face; or the Son of *Jesse* from his Crook, to his Scepter? or shall I on the other hand, show you the great *Assyrian* Monarch boasting that he had dried up the Rivers of besieged places with the soles of his Feet, and threatening to cut down all the tall Cedars of *Lebanon*, with such like vaunts, and then in a moment a Bridle put into his mouth, and a Hook into his Nostrils, and falling a Sacrifice in the house of his Idols? *Antiochus* breathing fire and ruin in his rage against *Jerusalem*, and then the next moment struck with a Disease, tumbled down headlong from his Chariot, and become the object of scorn and pity; his flatterers could not bear his stench, nor himself his pain. 'Twere endless to multiply Examples, not Sacred History only,

only, but Prophane too abounding in them. Hence it is that the notion of an uncontrollable Providence universally possessed Mankind, Sacrifice and Prayer, Humiliation and Thanksgiving, were as frequent in the Pagan, as once in the Jewish, or now in the Christian World. whence it is, that good Men have expressed so much confidence and security amidst a crowd of Dangers. For this is the natural Result of an assured Interest in the Divine Favour; the Exultancy of *David* seems to be the language of every righteous man, *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear; The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid: — when the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this would I be confident,* Psal. 27. 1, 2, 3. How lively a Notion doth this give us of the happiness of a Righteous Man? His Mind enjoys a Calm in that Storm which threatens his Life and Fortune. His Soul possesseth it self in Security and Peace amidst the Alarms and Dangers of War: happy surely is the Man

whose heart is thus established ; others may be politick, this Man alone is wise ; others may be fortunate, this Man alone is great. He's an imperfect Image of that God he trusts in ; that God, who even when he makes *Darkness his Pavilion, and thick Clouds round about him*, is all Light himself ; and in the midst of Lightnings and Thunders, Storms, Tempests, and Earthquakes, he's himself serene, calm, and undisturbed. But against all this it will be objected by some, We readily acknowledge the Power of God ; we believe too that Righteousness entitles Man to his Favour ; but, after all, this is not a sufficient ground of the Confidence you talk of ; for you must acknowledge too, that notwithstanding the Power of God, notwithstanding his regard for good Men, the righteous man doth very often, not only suffer, but perish in his righteousness ; and the wicked Man doth prolong his life in his wickedness, and preserve and increase what he calls his Glory, by his Crimes and Villainies. To this I answer, This doth indeed sometimes happen ; but this will not much diminish the comfort of a righteous man, if what I have said before concerning his Support and

Reward

Reward be well weighed ; or if we consider,

4ly. That God will certainly do what is best for those that serve him, and trust in him. The dispensations of Providence towards such shall ever be seasonable, ever beneficial : If Afflictions be necessary, these shall be their Portion. If Prosperity be useful, they shall have it, when they are prepared for it, when they are fit to enjoy it : for God's goodness is governed by unerring Prudence, and his Power influenced by infallible Wisdom. How great a Comfort, how great a Blessing is this to a Poor Creature, who hath so short a prospect of things to come, and so little an insight into the present ? Let us then but renounce our sins, let us but do good and trust in God, and then come what Events, what Times will, all things shall work together for our good ; what is, or what shall be, is that which should be. Doth the Trumpet sound an Alarm to War, War is best ; must Factions and Divisions embroil a State, even these like Thunder and Lightning shall but render the Air more clear, serene, and wholesome : *Sion* shall be redeemed with Judgment, and her Converts with Righteousness,

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ousness, if it cannot be otherwise. But if another kind of Fortune, if Calm times, Success, and Victory, be the things which the Glory of God, and the Interest of his People require, these shall not be denied us neither. In a word; The Commission of God to the Prophet *Isaiah* is, I think, the standing Commission given to every Preacher of the Gospel in all times, let it be fulfilled in what sence God thinks fit; *Chap. 3. 10, 11. Say ye unto the righteous that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the Wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.*

This minds me of the third and last thing propos'd:

3dly, That is, to conclude all with an Exhortation to Righteousness. That God is the only Support against Evil, I have fully proved; and the wicked themselves disown it not; for in the day of their distress, *they* too seek the Lord: and nothing is more superstitious in Adversity, than such as are careless and confident, irreligious and Prophane in Prosperity; that Righteousness alone en-  
titles



titles Man to the Favour and Patronage of God, and warrants our confidence in him, I need not prove. This is the voice of Nature, the voice of the Law and the Prophets; and the Gospel is so far from cancelling it, that it multiplies our Obligations to Righteousness. I will not therefore needlessly insist on the proof of this Proposition, but will in a word or two tell you, what I mean by Righteousness, and then show you how proper and becoming, how indispensable and necessary the practice of it is this day : By Righteousness I mean, in the Sinner, Repentance and Reformation, *a ceasing to do evil, and a Learning to do well.*

In the Regenerate I mean, faithfulness, vigilance, and activity more than formerly in their station, an abounding this day more than at other times in the works of God, and an increase of zeal for his glory ; how seasonable, how becoming is this in the present Juncture of Affairs; shall we who have on all occasions expressed so much tenderness for our Laws and Rights, contemptuously violate God's, and openly insult his Authority ? shall we, who de-

send the Protestant Religion with our Swords, destroy it by our Lives? shall we, who profess a zeal for the Liberty of *Europe*, be so far from expressing any for true Christian Liberty, as not only not to contribute what lyes in our power to the breaking the yoke, and shaking off the Tyranny of Hell from the neck of others, but also tamely to submit our own to it?

Nor is this Righteousness more becoming, than it is indispensable and necessary; for without this what are we to expect? God seems to have moved out of his place, and to have a Controversie with *Europe* this day; our neighbour Nations drink deep of the Cup of his Wrath, and shall we escape without Repentance? Are our Vertues so perfect, as not to need Chastisements? or our Vices so few, or so small, as not to call for Judgments? 'Tis therefore high time to begin the Work of Reformation, and to sacrifice the Sacrifices of Righteousness, and then we may put our trust in the Lord. But instead of this we are apt to flatter our selves with I know not what; that Religion is professed amongst us in its purity; that it 'twas sown and cultivated in the Blood of Martyrs; that  
God,

God will awake for his own sake, and his Truths sake, and plead our Cause, and that of Religion, with his and our Enemies. But may I not say to you as the *Baptist* did to the *Jews*, on a like occasion when the *Ax* was laid to the root of the Tree, *Think not to say in your selves we have Abraham to our Father; verily I say unto you, God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.* Though Earthquakes should sink this Island into the Sea, yet the Church of Christ wou'd stand upon a Rock, and the Gates of Hell should not prevail against it; and should this whole Nation turn Atheists or bigotted Papists, yet would God never want such who should worship him in Spirit and in Truth. If ever God could have been influenced by respect of Persons, surely it must have been towards the *Jews*; and yet how often, and irrecoverably too at last, was *Jerusalem* laid desolate, and that by the Idolatrous and Impious Heathen too? *Jerusalem* the Seed of *Abraham*, the Mother of Prophets, and once the residence of God himself, when he dwelt between the Cherubims, on the Mount of *Sion*.

But

But you will say, We rest not here, we acquiesce not in any pretensions to extraordinary Privileges, above other Nations; but we offer up to God Fasting and Prayer, and set apart days of Solemn Humiliation. 'Tis very well: But I must put you in mind, that Repentance must be joyned with Fasting, and Reformation with Prayers, or else this will avail us little. 'Tis plain from several places in the Prophets, that the Jews were an hearing, praying People, at the same time when they were a disobedient one too; that they wearied God with their Sacrifices and their Fasts, at the same time that they wearied him with their Sins too. And how God resented this, the Prophet *Isaiah* teacheth, us, *Chap. I. 13.* *Bring no more vain Oblations, Incense is an abomination to me; the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of Assemblies, I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even your solemn Meetings.* But will not the Prayers of Righteous men avail much? They will: I would to God they were more, and that they were more united. But we have Prayers against Prayers, and Fasts against Fasts, as if we were come to that last and worst state of *Jerusalem*, when Jesus Christ himself could do

do no more for it, than weep over it  
Tears of *Compassion* and *Despair*: If thou  
hadst known, even now at last, the things  
which belong to thy peace, but now they  
are hid from thine Eyes, Luke 19. 42.  
But were the Hearts and Prayers of the  
few Righteous this day one and the  
same, yet you know, there is a time  
when the Provocations of a People are  
grown to that height, that though *Noah*,  
*Daniel*, and *Job* stood in the Gap  
and interceded, they should save none but  
their own souls. How far we are advanced  
toward this state, or whether we  
are arrived at it, I dare not pretend to  
judge: Only I must say, we have great  
reason to fear it; when we consider  
how many Judgments and how many  
Mercies have been lost upon us.

And yet if this be our state, we have  
one Refuge, one Comfort left us; that  
where Intercession cannot, Reformation  
will prevail; where Fasting and Humiliation  
will not be accepted, there  
Repentance and Righteousness will.

This is evident from plain Scripture;  
for in the very same Chapter, *Ezek. 14*.  
wherein God affirms, that when he  
shall enter into Judgment with a Nation  
for its grievous Trespases, *Noah, Daniel,*



*niel, and Job should be able to save only their own Souls, by their Righteousness; yet verse 6. he exhorts the Jews to Repentance, as that which would be able to effect what Noah, Daniel, and Job could not. So Jer. xviii. 7, 8. God tells us in so many words, That at what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, or concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy; if that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil, I thought to do unto them.*

Let us then think every one upon our ways, and turn our Feet to the Testimonies of God; let us by Prayers and Tears, Repentance and Reformation, rout our Enemies, disperse our Fears, guard the Throne; and support the Church: O that this might prove the blessed fruit of our solemn Fasts throughout the Nation this day, Reformation on our side, and Favour and Protection on God's!

I should not then doubt, but that our Light should break forth as the Morning, and our Health, or Salvation should spring forth speedily; Then should Righteousness, *i. e.* Deliverance, go before us, and the Glory of the Lord should

should be our Rereward ; then should we call and the Lord would answer, we should cry, and he would say here I am.

Then should Success wait upon our Councils, and Victory upon our Arms; Peace should be within our Walls, and Plenty within our Palaces; the Voice of Joy should be heard in our Streets, and upon all, our Glory there should be a Defence ; and after all, all this should be but the foretaste of a more blessed State, and our *Canaan* but a Pledge of Heaven. *Happy are the People that are in such a case, yea blessed are the People who have the Lord for their God, Psal. 164. 15.*

*Now to God the Father, &c.*

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The

## The Seventh Sermon.

JOB XI. 7.

*Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection ?*

**I**OB in the foregoing Chapter, carried the Justification of his Integrity so far, that he seem'd to entrench somewhat rudely on the *Justice of Providence*; Zophar therefore to repress this Insolence, and vindicate the Divine Honor, lays before him the *Incomprehensibleness and Majesty of God*. That this is a proper Topick to awe the Rashness, and to chastise the Pride of Man, is evident from hence, that God himself makes use of it to this End, Chap. 38. *Then God answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, who is this that darkeneth Counsel by words without knowledge ? where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ? &c.*

And if ever it were necessary to possess our Minds with a due Sense of the  
Meanness

*Meanness of Man, and the Majesty of God,* 'tis now ; now, when *Luxury and Hypocrisy, Looseness and Corruption* do not more openly insult and affront the *Morals*, than *Atheism and Infidelity* the *Faith* of Christianity ; now, when *Scepticism, Heresie and Impiety* assault our Religion with all the *Artillery of Judaism, Arrianism, Photinianism, Turcism*: now, when bold Men trample under foot all *Mysteries*, and under colour of advancing *free and impartial Reason*, do in effect cashier *Revelation*. Never therefore was it more necessary than now to put the *Question* in my Text, and to invite the World to consider the *Consequences* naturally flowing from it. 'Tis a *Question* which implies its own *Answer*, *Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ?* i. e. 'Tis past all *Controversie* thou canst not. The Sense then of the Words is easily resolved into this *Proposition*: *That God is incomprehensible*. I will therefore,

1. Assert and illustrate this *Doctrine* in my Text, and then

2. Make two or three *Inferences* from it.

1. *That*

I. *That God is incomprehensible.* This is an *Article of the Athanasian Creed*; and if *universal Tradition* may be allowed to weigh any thing, there is no Doctrin in our Religion can lay a fairer Claim to it; but it needs derive no Strength from *Human Authority*, being asserted in almost so many Words in my Text, and either in express Terms, or immediate, necessary, and obvious Consequence, in innumerable others; and I think all Men who have not abandon'd their *Modesty*, with their *Faith*, must confess, that with respect to *human Capacity*, *infinite* and *incomprehensible* are Terms almost equivalent, and consequently whoever attributes the *one* to God must be obliged not to deny the *other*. All this being clear, I shall not so much labour to prove, as to illustrate, and unfold this Doctrin.

The Heathens painted their *Demiurgus*, to whom they assign'd Eternity, for a Companion in pitchy Darkness, retired within a Cave, which their Poets thus describe:

*Est ignota procul mentique impervia nostræ  
Vix adeunda Diis —*

Not intimating by this, that they had no knowledge at all of God amongst  
em



'em, but that the *Perfections of the Divine Nature*, were too vast, too high, too deep, what shall I say, *too mysterious* for human Minds, nay for Angels to search out. 'Twas this notion made the Philosopher exact so much *Modesty* and *Reverence* in all Discourses on Divine Things, which *Seneca* commends as a wise and great Thought.

Now all this was probably borrowed from *Moses* and the *Prophets*, how near soever God was to *Israel*, yet would not he endure that they should approach too near to *Mount Sinai* to gaze, *Exodus xix.*

21. And how familiarly soever God would be consulted by *Moses*, yet when he desired to see his *Glory*, Chap. 33. God said unto him, Verse 20. thou canst not see my face. And Verse 23. Thou shalt see my back parts but my face shall not be seen. To the same purpose is that of the Prophet, *Verily thou art a God that hidest thy self*, O God of *Israel* our Saviour, *Isai. xlv. 15.* and that of *Solomon*, the Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness, *1 Kings viii. 12.* Under the Gospel indeed the Son of God is said to have revealed God to us, *John i. 18.* but yet even this *Revelation* must not be supposed to have exhausted all the *Depths* and *Mysteries*

ries of the God-head; for notwithstanding this Revelation, we as yet see but as through a Glass darkly, we know but in part, and prophesie in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 9. He is reveal'd to us, as he was in the Pillar of Cloud and Fire to Israel, to guide our feet into Canaan, not to entertain our Curiosity; that is, he is sufficiently revealed in order to Holiness and Worship, but no further? for in all other Respects, if under the Old Testament, he made Darknes his Pavilion, under the New, he dwells in Light inaccessible.

To advance to Particulars; If in the God head we gaze and pry too boldly into Eternal Generation and Procession, and the ineffable Unity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it will but dazle and confound our weak Faculties; as far as the Scripture is plain, we may, and must advance, namely, that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God; if we content not our selves here, without a Philosophical Account of the mysterious and inexplicable Unity and Distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we shall be more like to lose our selves than find out an incomprehensible Truth. All human Explicati-  
ons

ons, as far as ever I could observe yet, do but breed new Doubts and Scruples, not dissipate the old.

If we enquire after the *Substance* or *Essence* of God, we are told indeed, *John. iv. 24. That he is a Spirit*, and so are *Angels* and *Souls*: but what vast Distance there is between that *Self Existent*, and these *created Spirits*; alas, what *human Understanding* can comprehend? When we speak but of *created Spirits*, how little is it that we know of *them*? We learn indeed from the Operations of our own Minds, that *Thinking* and *Liberty* belong to *Spirits*, but all our Attempts beyond this, look little better than ingenious Guesſes, and fanciful Amusements. The most subtil Discourses on this Subject, seeming to me to amount to but this at most, that we rather understand *what Spirits are not*, than *what they are*. A *Spirit*, 'tis true, *Reason* and *Revelation* tell us, *has not Flesh and Bones*, is not made of the same *Stuff with our mortal Bodies*, *Luke xxiv. 39.* But if we demand what the *Substance* of it is, alas, we can form no *Idea* of this; our *Fancy* grovels, and cannot raise it self above this visible World, above *Matter*, above *Body*,

above some *pure Ethereal Substance*, or something of that Nature, I know not what, which is but a little better Account of this Matter, for ought I know, than *Homer's* and *Epicurus* his *ᾠαὶ σαρξ*, and *ᾠαὶ αἷμα*, as it were *Flesh*, and as it were *Blood*.

Let us now come to the *Attributes* of God. Here not to mention, that the very Distinction between *Essence* and *Attributes*, is meer Condescension to the Weakness of *human Capacity*; that it is as difficult to conceive *both* to be the *very same simple thing*, as it is repugnant to *Reason* to *divide* and *separate* them. Not I say to mention this, the *Attributes* of God, as they have their *bright* side, so have they their *dark* one too; as far as God has revealed, we stand upon sure and safe Ground, but beyond this we know not where we tread; for if we go about to frame our Notions of *boundless Perfections*, from some faint Resemblances of them in *created Beings*, and to judge of God by the actings and movings of our own Minds in these Bodies of Clay, we must needs fall vastly beneath any just and commensurate *Idea* of Divine Excellencies:



cies; and yet this is the highest, this is the utmost Effort of Reason.

All the *Attributes* of God are *infinite* in their *Perfection*, and whosoever goes about to fathom what is *infinite*, is guilty of the Folly of that Country-man in the *Poet*, who sitting on the Bank-side, expects to see the Stream run quite away, and leave its Channel dry; but that runs on and will do so to all Ages. Thus he that goes about to frame to himself an adequate Notion of *Omnipotence*, and *Omnipresence*, cannot but attempt the Contradiction of limiting the *one*, and manacling the *other*, The Mind which travails in the Contemplation of *Eternity*, loseth its self in the Journey, like an *Eye*, which if it meet with nothing to intercept its Prospect, its *Quickness* doth not find an End, but its *Weakness* makes one.

If we proceed to God's *Moral Attributes*, 'tis certain, that as much as is revealed of them, we do, or may understand aright; but if we fancy we can comprehend the whole Extent of them, we do but deceive our selves; for *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, as well as *Power* and *Duration* are *infinite* when ascribed to God and therefore tho our *Moral Habits* have so much,



Resemblance of these *Divine Attributes*, that the *Spirit* styles them the *Image of God*, Col. iii. 10. and a *Participation of the Divine Nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. Yet does the *same Spirit*, with respect to the *Infiniteness* of God's *Moral Perfections*, assert that there are *none good*, Luke xviii. 19. *None wise. but God*, 1 Tim. i. 17. In a word, all Men that think *soberly*, have ever taught that the best way of defining or describing the *Perfections of God*, is by excluding and removing from him all the *Defects and Imperfections* of his *Creatures*; which is the same thing as if we should say of every *Divine Attribute*, that it has in it all the *Perfection* we can possibly conceive, and *infinitely more*.

The Sum of all is this, Tho God were so far discoverable by the *Light of Reason*, as served to render the *Idolatry and Wickedness* of the *Pagan World* unexcusable, Rom. i. tho he were revealed to the *Jew*, and more fully to us under the *Gospel*, to instruct us in the Nature of Religious Worship, and our Obligations to it, yet still God being *infinite*, and his *Perfections* a vast Abyss, there are therefore *Mysteries in the God-head*, which *human Reason* cannot penetrate,

Height

*Heights* which we cannot soar, and *Reason* it self, if it be not drunk with *Pride and Arrogance*, will not only acknowledge that it is thus, but also that it is fit it should be thus; for if Man could fully comprehend God, how Great must we be, how little He, we more than Men, He less than God. When the Prophet tells us, that all the Nations upon Earth, in Comparison of him, are but as the drop of the Bucket, or the Grain of the Balance, *Isai. xl.* and by a clear Consequence all the Knowledge and Understanding upon Earth, if united in one Man, can be but as a little Particle of Light to that eternal Sun, a Drop to that eternal, boundless, and inexhaustible Fountain, how is it possible, that Man should comprehend God!

I will conclude my Reflections upon this Proposition in the Words of Zophar, close after my Text, *Vers. 8, 9.* It is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea, Having thus open'd and establish'd the Doctrine in my Text, That God is Incomprehensible; I will now proceed to make Two or three inferences from it.

1. To let out the Tumor of Self-conceit.
2. To justifie our Belief of Mysteries.
3. To vindicate the Doctrine of Providence.

1. The Consideration of God's *Incomprehensibleness*, should methinks *bumble Man*, prevail with him to *think soberly of himself*, and to contain his Enquiries after God, within *sober and modest Bounds*. This is that *Zophar* seems to aim at, witness that sharp Reflection, *Verse 12. Vain Man would be wise, tho Man be born like a wild Asses Colt.* 'Tis obvious to us all, *what Man is born*, and 'tis as obvious, that he grows up into a rational Creature, by slow steps, repeated Instructions, and tedious Experience; and 'tis as evident, that in the height and maturity of his rational Attainments, the Soul how great soever it be in its self, is clogg'd by a lumpish Body, streighten'd by scanty Organs, clouded by Passions, and perverted by Prejudices, which always limit, and too too frequently misguide it, in its *Enquiry after Truth*. This being so, there cannot be a clearer Proof of *Man's Folly*, than his aptness to be *puffed up* with an Opinion of his Wisdom, nor can any thing more notoriously expose his Ignorance,

rance, than his Extravagant Pretensions to an unlimited and an universal Knowledge. What, nothing satisfy this poor Creature, but *the Comprehending or discarding Mysteries*! What, can this *Understanding*, such as I have described it, be the *Test and Standard of Universal Truth*! Can this *shallow Capacity* measure the *utmost* Extent of Nature, and the God of it too! Alas, We may with as much Reason pretend to contain *the Waters in the Hollow of our Hand*, to mete out *Heaven with a Span*, and weigh the *Mountains of the Earth in a pair of Scales*! 'Tis true, we have *Revelation*, but we ought never to forget that of *S. Paul*, *When I was a Child, I thought as a Child, I spake as a Child*; for in the *brightest Revelations* God talks with us in such Language, instructs and governs us by such Notions, as we in this *our Childhood* are capable of; our *Language* is that of Men, not Angels, and our Notions such as fit this *State of Mortality*, not one of *Glory or Perfection*. When ever therefore we go about proudly to explicate a *Mystery*, as if it were indeed but an *Idol*, the Figment of Man's Brain, we serve it as the *Ark of God* did *Dagon*, cast it down from the height where it stood



stood to the Earth, and leave it a maim'd and shapeless Trunk.

But what talk I of our *Comprehension of Divine Mysteries*, when there is scarcely the most trifling Product of Nature, an *Ant*, a *Fly*, a *Spire of Grass*, that has not something or other in it that fools our Enquiry, and baffles our Confidence; how much more then the God of Nature who is concealed from us by the infinite Splendour of his inconceivable Glories, and retired within the Veil of his incomprehensible Excellencies and Perfections. Ah! let us then content our selves with *admiring* and *loving* that God, which we cannot yet at least *comprehend*. Let us imitate *Elijah*, who when God passed by, *wrapt his Face in a Mantle*, and stood at the Mouth of the Cave, to *adore* and *worship*, not gaze upon his Majesty. Let us content our selves with such a Search after the Knowledge of God, as may sanctifie and exalt our Minds, as may strengthen and establish our Obedience, and enkindle in us ardent Desires after that Heaven, wherein we shall no longer *know in part*, and *see as through a Glass darkly*, but we shall *know as we are known*, and *see Face to Face*. In the mean time,

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II. *The Incomprehensibleness of God does abundantly justify our Belief of Gospel-Mysteries.*

A *Mystery* in the Notion of some at this Day, is indeed a very odd thing, that is, something of which we understand nothing at all, and from hence they fasten upon us those insulting Consequences, that we believe we know not what, and that we make Christ in revealing a *Mystery* to have revealed just nothing at all. Truly, whatever these Men pretend to, there is little Acuteness in this, What, is there no difference between knowing *all things*, and knowing *nothing*, between a *full* and *comprehensive Knowledge* and *utter Ignorance*? Blessed be God, the meanest of our People have a better Notion of a *Mystery*, and 'tis this, *That it is a Doctrine or Article, wherein much is revealed, and yet much hidden and abstruse*; wherein there is something *plain* and *intelligible*, something *deep* and *inscrutable*; something that we *do* or *may know*, something that we *cannot*. That there are such *Mysteries* in the Gospel, no Man ought to doubt, when S. Paul asserts, *that we know but in part*. Such a *Mystery* is God, as I have shew'd already, and such a  
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*Mystery* is the *Incarnation* of our *Lord*. That the *Word* was made *Man* is reveal'd, and there is no *Term* in this Proposition but what is intelligible enough; but if we enquire into the *Nature* and *Manner* of that *Union* wherein this *Incarnation* consists, this is to all of us a *Mystery*; and I wonder not if it seem a very contradictory one to a *Soci-nian*, whose *Divinity* and *Philosophy*, if we may take his *Word*, are not able to furnish him with any higher Notion of *Union* than what results from *Coextention of parts*.

This being the Notion of a *Mystery*, to assert the Reasonableness of believing one, when revealed by God, is no more than to assert, That the *Incomprehensibleness* of something involved and wrapt up, ought not to supplant our Belief, of that which is *plain* and *intelligible* in a *Divine Revelation*; That *secret things* belong to God, but *those that are revealed* to us and our *Children*; That the *Shallowneß* of human Capacity is no *Objection* against the *Veracity* of God, nor ought our *Dimneß* or *Dulneß* to invalidate or disparage *Divine Authority*; All this is plain of its self, and if it were not, may be made out by unanswerable Arguments. To  
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make *Mysteries* stoop and bow down to our Capacities, and if they will not, to reject them, is in effect to divest them of their Nature, and to make them none. Besides, what Grounds shall we proceed upon in such an Enquiry as this? Shall we judge of Divine Things by Maxims of *Corpuscular Philosophy*? How ridiculous and absurd were this? especially when the *Philosophy* of one Age overthrows that of another, and Time again rather confounds the *Old*, than establishes the *New*. Indeed, in almost every days Experience, something or other occurs to every modest Enquirer into Nature, too wonderful, and too big for our Capacities, so that we are forc'd, either to disbelieve the Evidence of our *Sense*, or to confess the Weakness of our *Reason*. Is it reasonable then to expect that the *Mysteries of our Faith* should be more easie and demonstrable than the *Objects of our Sense*? Or if not, yet, that that *Reason* which is so purblind, in the search of *Natural*, should be a competent Judge of *Divine Things*? It is true, to believe without a Reason for it, is *Credulity*, not *Faith*: But it is as true, that as the *Sovereignty and Goodness* of God, is the Supreme Reason of our

our *Obedience*, so is his *Veracity* of our *Faith*. So that all that *Reason* can have to do here, is not to reject the *Articles* revealed, because we cannot fathom all the *Depths* and *Mysteries* contain'd in them, but to examine the *Authority* and *sense* of the *Revelation*, and these being once cleared, to Sacrifice all our doubts and *Scruples* to our *Faith*.

And as this is most *reasonable*, so is it most *safe* too, and that upon two plain *Grounds*;

1. Because thus we worship God with our *Understandings* as well as *Wills*, and captivate our *Reasons* as well as our *Affections* to the *Obedience of Faith*.

2. This will secure our *Faith*, and keep us from Apostatizing thorough *Pride* or *Confidence*; whereas such as stumble at every thing in *Scripture*, which includes in it any thing *deep* and *inscrutable*, such who indulge to themselves such a *liberty of Propheying*, as to forsake the received and obvious sense of *Scripture*, if it do not square with their *Axioms* or *Rules of proud Reason*. Such as these, have in all *Ages* miserably tortured and perverted the *Scripture*, and adulterated our holy Religion by *sophistical Subtilties* and *bold Fancies*, devested it  
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of every thing that is august and mysterious in it, debased our *Faith* into vain *Philosophy*, our *Christianity* into mere *Paganism*, divided the *Church of Christ* by innumerable *Schisms*, and multiplied bold and blasphemous *Heresies* from time to time. In a word if we will be Christians, the Reason of our faith must be resolved into the Veracity of God, not the Philosophy of Man; and we must search the Scriptures, with the generous Bereans, to see whether these things be true or no; but must not stupidly or arrogantly put the Question of Nicodemus, how can these things be?

But does not this make way for Superstition and Error under pretence of Mystery? on the quite contrary; whoever forsakes the received, natural and obvious sense of Scripture, as he has no warrant to expect the conduct and guidance of the Spirit, so has he reason to fear that fancy may lead him to fatal Precipices. Besides that such a one ought to Remember that wresting the words of Scripture by Criticism, or its sense by subtilty or Sophistry is the next step to a down-right rejecting its Authority. But must we then admit of a sense loaded with Contradictions? by no means; But we



we must take Care, least while we Combat the *Fancies* and *Notions* of Men, we carry on the War too far, and oppose and fight against the *express sense* and *Mind of God*. We must take Care too, in the next place, that we be not too forward to charge what is *above our Reason* with Contradictions, for this, if it be not it self a Contradiction to right Reason, is one to Modesty and Ingenuity, for 'tis to pronounce of and censure what we do not understand.

*Lastly, The Incomprehensibleness of God solves all the Difficulties that clog the Doctrine of Providence.* These must be acknowledged to be many. To make the *actual Concourse* or *Superintendance* of God, in every *Folly* or *Sinful Action*, in every *trifling Production*, or *Blunder of Nature*, to consist with his *Dignity* and *Majesty*; To reconcile *Confusion* and *Disorder* with *unerring Wisdom*, a thousand fortuitous and blind *Events* with *eternal* and *uncontroulable Counsel* and *Contrivance*, *Infallibility* in *Foreknowledge* with *Uncertainty* in *Events*, *Fate* and *Necessity* in the *End*, with *Freedom* and *Contingency* in the *Means*, this seems a very puzzling Undertaking. As to the promiscuous Dispensation of Good and Evil, the wisest and best

best Men were sometimes at a Loss to reconcile this with the *Wisdom* and *Justice* of God. 'Tis true, a *Judgment* to come, solves this Difficulty, and it may be, *Humility* might have done so without it, since the best Men, what Evil soever they met with, have receiv'd more, and suffered less, than they deserved. But it may be, it is more difficult to make this kind of Administration consist with God's Love and Zeal for Virtue, than with his Justice. Again, In our Notion of Perfection to do less good than one can, is a *Defect* at least, and yet if God had made all things at first, as *perfect*, or govern'd 'em since as well as he could, whence is it, that the World is such as it is. But, if in *temporal Things* only, a *blind and Arbitrary Chance* did seem to govern, another Life might rectifie this, but what shall rectifie it in *spiritual Things*? That Grace should be dispens'd as unaccountably as temporal Favours, that the *Manifestation of Jesus in the flesh*, should be the only effectual Means to reclaim the World, and yet that he should make his Entrance into it so late, that untimely Death should surprize well inclined Persons in their first

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Debauches, and pious ones in their first Revolts and Relapses, when others desperately and irrecoverably wicked, sin out Life to the last, fullest and ripest Period; For so much Sin to enter into a world of God's own Creation, and grow to such an Excess, if God had done all he could to prevent or extirpate it, seems hardly consistent with his *infinite Power and Wisdom*, and yet for God to neglect any Means necessary to the Prevention or Suppression of it, seems no less inconsistent with *his Holiness*; That the Almighty should foresee from all Eternity how small the Flock would be which should inherit Heaven, and how his wretched Creatures would throng in Crouds the *broad way to destruction*, and yet delight to *Create a World*, which was to be fill'd with so much Sin, and end in so much Misery, seems very difficultly reconcilable with his *Goodness*, and yet that he should not foresee all this is utterly inconsistent with his *Perfection*, and particularly his *Foreknowledge*. These and such like Difficulties, the *Manichees* endeavoured to solve by asserting *two first Principles*, an *evil*, and a *good one*, but with what success every Body



they appear *uniform, regular and harmonious*; we can therefore no more judge of the *Wisdom, Justice, or Goodness* of God, by any *particular* Instances of *Providence* disjointed from the whole, than we can of the *Beauty and Spirit* of a Poem by some shattter'd, confus'd and incoherent Fragments

The World, in a Word, is often wont and very properly, to be compared to a *well laid Dramatick Plot*, which tho to the Spectator who beholds some part only it seems ravell'd and intangl'd, yet to the Author who walks within the *Mysteries* of his own Scenes, the whole appears smooth and natural, and if you will have the patience to sit it out to the *last Act*, it will appear so to us too. The *Day* is just ready to open, that will decypher all the *Riddles of Divine Providence*, unravel all the *Intricacies*, and unfold all the *Mysteries* of its elaborate Scenes, and we shall then see *Perfection* rising out of *Corruption*, like *Light* out of *Darkness*, *Sin* ending in *Holineß*, and the *Miseries* of all who do not willfully obstruct it in *Happineß*. In the mean time, our business is not to intrude our selves into the  
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*Counsels of God*, to arraign the Conduct which we do not understand; much less to reject a Providence, because we cannot discover the *hidden Springs*, trace the *various Windings*, and ken the *distant Ends* of it; But to adore the *Wisdom* which we cannot fathom, and with an humble awe magnifie and revere those *Counsels* which we cannot penetrate. Let us follow the Advice of Zophar, Vers. 13.

14. *Let us prepare our hearts and stretch out our hands towards God, if iniquity be in our hands let us put it far away, and let not Wickedness dwell in our Tabernacles.* Then may we securely confide in God, and follow wheresoever his Providence leads, and those Paths which appear to us like *Labyrinths* and *Mazes*, will yet prove our next way to our *Canaan*; for *all things* must and will work together for good to them that love and fear God.

And now I have nothing more to do, but to convert my *Exhortations* into *Prayers*. May the Contemplation of the *Incomprehensible Mystery of God* increase our Veneration for our *Holy Religion*, and secure the Peace of our Bosoms against the Assaults of *Profaneness* and

*Irreligion* on the one hand, and of *Pride* and *Herésie* on the other: May God fill our Souls with *Faith* and *Love*; and may an *awful Reverence* and *devout Humility* guard and fortifie both: May the *Spirit of Religion* in all of us, never evaporate in *giddy Novelties* and *daring Disputes*, but exert it self in *solid Virtues* and *great and good Works*.

*Lastly*, May we all be inspired with a *zeal* for God, a *zeal* that may make us the *great Examples* as well as *Affertors* of our *truly Catholick and Apostolick Faith*; a *zeal* that may effectually contribute to give a stop to the spreading *Leprosie* of *Herésie* and *Innovation*, to root out *Atheism* and *Wickedness*, and to propagate *Godliness* in the power of it throughout these *Realms*. So shall that God who hath promised to honour those who honour him, be our strength and *Glory*, our *Confidence* and *Boast* all the day long; and when we have happily finished our *Race*, and bow down under no other weight than that of *Years* and of *Mortal Body*, he shall translate us into the *Presence* of his *Glory*, where we shall find the *Seraphim* themselves praising that *Humility* and *Zeal*, which I  
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invite you to here; for they are described in the Prophet to have *two wings to cover their Eyes, two to cover their Feet, and two to fly.*

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son,  
&c.*

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## The Eighth Sermon.

I SAM. XXV. 10, 11.

*And Nabal answer'd David's Servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the Son of Jesse? There be many Servants now adays that break away every Man from his Master. Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men whom I know not whence they be?*

**T**HE Occasion of these words was this; David being reduc'd to the want of Necessaries in the Wilderness, sends ten Servants to Nabal with this Message. V. 6, 7, 8. *And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee and peace be to thine House, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy Shepherds which were with us, we hurt 'em not, neither was there ought missing unto them all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee:*

thee : wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes : (for we come in a good day) give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy Servants, and to thy Son David. The Petition, you see, is from one in *streights* to one in *prosperity*. The Matter of it is modest and reasonable : give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, the plainest of thy Provision, what thou canst spare from thy state and store : For I expect not thou shouldst diminish the glory of thy Entertainment, or retrench any thing from the Mirth, the Joy, or Luxury of thy Guests to supply our Wants. The grounds of the Request are clear and strong ; For besides the general Obligation which Prosperity lays upon all Men to succour the Distress'd and Needy, *David* had a more particular and immediate Title to the Charity and Munificence of *Nabal*. For when his *Servants*, and his *Flocks* were in his power, he had not only abstain'd from the least wrong and violence towards either, *himself*, which was no small courtesie in *Military Men* : but had been a security and guard to'em against that of all others. So that *Nabal* was bound in Justice as well as Generosity, in Gratitude as well as Charity, to have



have given *David* a gracious and obliging Answer. Especially when we add to all, that this Petition of *David* was made with all the decent Insinuation and Address imaginable. Thus shall ye say to the great Man, *Peace be both to thee, &c. behold we come unto thee in a good day; let the young men find favour in thine eyes; give I pray thee unto thy Servants and unto thy Son David.* To this Petition who cou'd have expected the Answer in my Text? an Answer wherein I cannot tell which to condemn most; the Sordidness, or the Pride, the Insolence, or the Folly, the Ingratitude, or the Inhumanity, of it. And *Nabal answer'd, &c.*

In these words I shall consider two things.

1. The Persons concern'd in 'em, The Suppliant and the Refuser. And *Nabal answer'd David's Servants.*

2. *Nabal's* Apology for his Uncharitableness, *Who is David? and who is the Son of Jesse? There be many Servants now adays, &c.*

1. Of the Suppliant or Petitioner.

This was *David*; *David*, whose least Title was the Son of *Jesse*. He was the Son-in-law of *King Saul*, and by God's appointment Heir of the Kingdom. But

But what was more than all this together, he was a good Man, and a Prophet; a *Man after God's own heart*. I will not mention the Comeliness of his Person, the Greatness of his Mind, the Accomplishments of his Education, or the Brightness of his Natural Parts. I will not insist on his Love of his Country, or his celebrated Friendship for *Jonathan*: I'll not praise his Courage or Conduct in the Field; nor his Experience, or Sufficiency in Council, or Civil Affairs: nor will I take notice what his Merit towards the Publick was; or how far the Peace and Glory of his Country was owing to his single Vertue. I will only say, That neither Prophane nor Sacred History ever afforded a nobler Subject for *Panegyrick* than *David*. But this is not my business; all that belongs to me to observe here is, that *David* was such a one, that a Man who had the least Zeal for God, or for his Country; who had any Notion of Vertue or Honour; who had, in a word, any Soul, or any Sense, wou'd have thought it one of the most fortunate Accidents of his Life; and the Crown and Perfection of his Prosperity, to have seen *David* his *Suppliant*, and to have found himself

himself in a Condition to oblige him. But *Nabal*, whose Character I must give you next, was a stranger to all good and honourable Qualities, and was not to be moved by any Considerations; tho' such as wou'd have commanded the utmost Assistance from any but himself. If we look upon him in his *Fortune*, he is represented as a Rich and great Man, *V. 2.* Now there was a Man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the Man was very great, and he had 3000 Sheep and 1000 Goats. This was a part of his Wealth, to which, no doubt, all the rest, his Lands, his Herds of Cattle, his Houses, his Servants, his Money, bare proportion. *David*, as considerable as he was, either with respect to the glory of his past actions, the justice and greatness of his future hopes, or the strength which he then commanded, address'd himself to him with great Humility, as to a great Man: *Thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity; peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine House &c. v. 6.* and then *v. 8.* *Let the young Men find favour in thy Eyes: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy Servants, and to thy Son David.* Thus far the Man makes a very goodly figure,

figure ; and commands some sort of regard from the World : for in that and this and every Age the World bows down to Wealth and Greatness, and ever will. But if we come a little nearer to him ; if we view him more closely in his Nature and his *Morals*, we shall find this *Idol* of the *World* just such another thing as an *Idol* of the *Egyptians* : ev'ry thing about him full of state and worship ; but himself, a Monky, a Crocodile, or some other the most contemptible of Creatures. Such a thing, I say, is *Nabal* in himself : for how gawdy and glittering soever his Fortune were, Luxury and Riot, and yet Sordidness and Inhumanity ; Vanity and Ostentation, and yet Sowness and Churlishness ; in one word, Wilfulness and Pride, Self-love, Sortishness and Folly, make up his *Character* ; and Shame and Deformity constitute the very *Essence* of his Soul. All which I might infer from this single action of his, his *Answer* to the *Request* of *David* ; and that at a time when his Soul, if ever capable of it, might have been presum'd enlarg'd and set free from Cares and Covetousness, from Moroseness, and Churlishness. For 'tis said, v. 36. *He held a Feast in his House like*  
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*the Feast of a King ; and his heart was merry within him. But we need not form our judgment of him by Inferences. His Wife and his Servants, who certainly knew him best, give us a very wretched account of him. A Servant giving his Mistress a Relation of what past between him and David's young men, concludes it with this very severe Reflection, Our Master is such a Son of Belial, that a Man cannot speak to him, v. 17. And his Wife represents him to David, as a Man not worth his anger ; telling him, that Nabal in all he had done, had but acted like himself : and that he might as well be angry with an Ass for braying, or a Cur for snarling, as with Nabal for Ingratitude, Sordidness or Railing. Let not my Lord, I pray thee, regard this Man of Belial, even Nabal : for as is his NAME, so is he, NABAL is his Name, and FOLLT is with him, v. 25. Having thus impartially represented David and Nabal, give me leave to make two or three Reflections on their different Characters and Fortunes : which may I hope, in some measure, contribute to promote the design of this Solemnity.*

First then, I believe there is not a wealthy Person present, who wou'd not  
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account it an honour, a happiness, to be a Patron and Benefactor to such a Supplicant as *David*; and yet, I doubt, many may prove deaf and impregnable to whatever I can say in behalf of those for whom I plead this day. This, I must tell you, is a gross mistake. The Cause of *Charity* is ever honourable and important, whatever the *Supplicant* be. The Safety of our Country, the Honour of Religion, and the Salvation of Souls, have a great interest in our Alms. Charity, as it is the greatest, so is it the Loveliest of all the Vertues of the Gospel: and by consequence as nothing adds greater Lustre and Ornament to our Religion, so nothing is more apt to reconcile Sinners to an Esteem for it, or to prevail with God to preserve both it and us. If this don't prove what I aim at, I must carry the matter a little further; and tell you, that those towards whom I implore your Bowels of Compassion, are greater than *David*; they are *Christians*, *Disciples of Jesus*, *the Children of God*, and *Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven*: And being so, you will not be surprized at my Assertion when you call to mind the words of our *Saviour* concerning *John the Baptist*, Matt. 11. 11. *Verily*  
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*I say unto you, among them that are born of Women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist : Notwithstanding he that is the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, is greater than he. And yet I must advance a little higher still, and put you in mind, that so close is the union betwixt Christ, and his poor needy Members, that they sustain his Person, and in them you confer your Alms upon him. This is the plain Doctrine of our Master Mat. 25. for there he tells us, that when he shall appear in the glory of his Father, with his holy Angels, at the last day, and all Nations shall be gather'd before him, he shall say unto the Righteous, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepar'd for you from the foundation of the World : For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye cloathed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in Prison, and ye came to me. Then shall the Righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee ? or thirsty, and gave thee drink ? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? or when saw we thee naked, and cloathed thee ? or when saw we thee sick or in prison, and*  
came

came unto thee? And the King shall answer, and say unto them, *Verily, I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

This being so, the *Argument* by which David endeavour'd to move Nabal, that he had been a guard, and a wall about all that he had, and that other soft Insinuation, give, I pray thee, unto thy Servants and unto thy Son David, fall infinitely short of those which every poor Christian has a right to make use of: Give to him, who has redeem'd, who has preserv'd not thy *Substance*, but thy *Soul*: give to him, who lov'd thee, and died for thee, that he might rescue thee from the captivity and bondage of the Devil, from the Corruptions of thy Nature and the Wrath of God; and restore thee to his Favour, to the Vertue, and the Glory, to the Liberty and Immortality of the *Sons of God*. And indeed every Christian does in effect, attack thee with all these passionate Arguments, as often as he makes known his Necessities to thee, and importunes thy Compassion by our common Christianity, and the Name of our common Redeemer.

I'll leave thee to consider, what guilt thou dost contract as often as thou dost scornfully and imperiously, barbarously, or uncharitably, reject *his* Petitions.

My *next* Reflection shall be founded on the Character of *Nabal*, and 'tis *this*: That want of *Charity* is, generally, an *Argument* of want of true *Sense*, as well as of true *Religion* and *Vertue*. 'Tis an *Argument* of want of *Sense*; for no part of a rich man's Fortune is so advantageously employ'd, as that which is laid out in *Charity*. The *meaner* sort of People are a *wall* and a *guard* about the *wealthier*, either in their Persons or their Prayers: and the *Tenderness* of the Rich to the Poor is an *Obligation*, not only on those that *want*, but on those that are most *liable* to do so; on all who are next *related* to them, either in Fortune, or Nature. So that the Service and Affection of our *Neighbour*, our *own* Honour and Security, are never so certainly and cheaply purchas'd, as by our *Charity*. That *Uncharitableness* is, *next*, an *Argument* of want of all true *Religion* and *Vertue*, is plainer yet. For the Covetous and Uncharitable have, like *Nabal*, neither Honour, nor Gratitude; neither Faith in *God*, nor Kindness for *Man*;



*Man*; no Zeal for *Publick Good*, nor Compassion for *Private Misery*. All their Aims, all their Kindness, all their Passion, center in *themselves*: so that we are not to wonder if *this sort* of Sinners be contemned by *Man* and abhorr'd by *God*.

*Lastly*, From *David's* being reduc'd to *Distress*, and *Nabal's* living in *Prosperity*, I infer, that *Abundance* is no *Honour*; nor *Poverty* a *Disparagement* to any Man. For sometimes the Man of Understanding and Vertue may be brought low, when the Wicked may snort and wallow in his Prosperity. *For the Race is not to the swift, nor the Battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise; nor yet Riches to men of understanding; nor yet favour to men of Skill: but time and chance hapneth to them all, Eccles. 9. 11.* This I have remark'd, not to stir up *Rudeness*, or *Impudence* in the Poor towards the Rich; for that wou'd overthrow all Order and Distinction: But to dissuade the Rich from carrying it *insolently* towards the Poor; by putting them in mind that this *difference of Fortune* is too slight and inconsiderable a thing, to raise the true value of any Man, or to puff him up with an arrogant Opinion of himself,

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himself, and contempt of others. Were *this Notion* well settled in the World, it wou'd soon introduce a more generous *Charity*. For one great, if not chief Reason, that makes Men fond of *Riches* is, that, as they think, it sets 'em far *above* their Neighbour, and makes 'em *far greater* and more *considerable* than others. Were this Fancy once thoroughly reform'd, 'tis easie to see that there wou'd be no great need of *Abundance*; and that Men wou'd choose rather to be *Wise* and *Holy*, than *Rich*: to do *much Good*, rather than lay up *much Money*.

II. The next thing to be consider'd is *Nabal's Apology*. This may be reduc'd to three Heads:

1. Propriety; *Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, &c.*

2. Inability; *That I have killed for my shearers, &c.*

3. The Demerit and Unworthiness of *David*, and his Followers: *and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be? Who is David? and who is the Son of Jesse? There be many Servants now adays, that break away every man from his Master, &c.*

1. Propriety; *Shall I take my flesh, &c.* which is as much as if he should have

have said, What is *mine* I'll keep for my self, for my *own need*, and for my *own service*: Let *David* take care for *himself*, as I have done. This *Plea* implies two remarkable *Errors*: (1.) That what we *give* another we *lose* our selves. (2.) That our *Propriety* in our *Estates* *bars* all *Claims* and *Pretensions* of the *Poor*. As to the *first*, if what we *give* be really *lost*; If our *Alms* be sown in the *Sand*, and while we *relieve* another's *needy Fortune*, we *impoverish* or *diminish* our *own*; what becomes of the *truth* of *God*? where is the *faithfulness* of his *Promises*? What do all *these* *Assurances*, which *God* has given us, of *Protecting* and *Blessing*, of *Enriching* and *Rewarding* the *Liberal* and *Bountifull*, signify? *Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days*, Eccles. 11. 1. *He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given him, will he pay him again*, Prov. 19. 17. *The liberal shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself*, Prov. 11. 25. *He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor: his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour*, Psal. 112. 9. What shou'd I multiply *Texts*? they are almost *innumerable*, contain-

ing a large *Charter*, both of Spiritual and Temporal Blessings, made over to him who gives Alms, and succours the Distressed. I hope there are none here so much *Infidels*, as either to doubt, whether these *Texts* be really *God's Word*, or whether *God* will be as good as his word.

2. This *Plea* implies that the *Poor* man has no right, no claim to any share of what is *ours*. But this is utterly false too : and to convince you of it, I desire you only to consider how you came by your Wealth. Will you deny it to be the gift of God ? will you indeed arrogantly pretend that it is owing only to your selves ? You cannot forget that it was a high Provocation in *Israel*, when they ascribed their Houses and their Vineyards to their own Prowess and Merit ; when they forgot *G O D*, and said, my own *Arm*, and my own *Power* hath got me this *Wealth* and remembered not that it is *God* that gives Man power to get wealth. But if indeed you do beleive that you *have nothing that you have not received*, that you owe all you have to the Providence and Bounty of God, then, I suppose, you will not think it unreasonable that God shou'd charge those *Estates* he gives you, with what *Annuities*,

ties, *Pensions*, or *Reservations*, he thinks fit: and he has thought fit, that the *Poor* shou'd be provided for out of the Revenues of the *Rich*. This he has so often declar'd in his *Word*, that none of you can be ignorant of it. The *Poor* then has as good a *Title* to his share, as the *Rich* has to his: A *Title* derived immediately from the Universal Donor, or Supream Proprietor: whence it is, that he who refuses him this, is said, by *Solomon*, to withhold good from him to whom it is due, Prov. 3. 27. Let me therefore beseech such as are *Rich* in this *World*, that you correct this Notion; that you look not hereafter on your selves as *Masters* only, but *Trustees* also: not as *Proprietors* only, but *Stewards* too in the Family of God upon Earth: and that you remember that you are deeply concern'd in that Declaration of our Lord, Matth. 24. 45. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made Ruler of his household to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing: Verily, I say unto you, that he shall make him Ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his

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coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day that he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the Hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. If these things were well laid to heart; if men were really convinc'd that the Poor have a right to Relief from the Rich; that Riches are Talents committed by God to us, not to be wasted on our Lusts, Fancies and Humours, or laid up in a Napkin, but to be employ'd for the glory of God, and the good of Man; and that of this we shall suddenly give an account: if these things, I say, were well weigh'd, Riches wou'd create in us Sollicitude, not Confidence. For we shou'd see our Obligations to do good encreas'd with our Capacity: and that the greater Trust God reposes in us, the greater Account have we to give: and the Effect of this wou'd be, we shou'd think dispersing wisely abroad, our greatest gain; and doing good the greatest Advantage and truest Enjoyment of Wealth.

2. Nabal's next pretence is *Inability*. And there being no Colour for this in  
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his *Fortune*, which was great and opulent, he pleads his *Occasions*. The *Number* of those he was to entertain was great; his *provision*, whate're it was, was no more than *needed*; and therefore when his own wants or necessities were serv'd, he shou'd have nothing to spare : *shall I take my bread, and my flesh, which I have kill'd for my shearers ?* *Inability* is the most general Excuse, and the most easily admitted : and this indifferently arises, either from a *Narrow Fortune*, or an *Obligation to great Expences*. Our necessary and unavoidable Charges ; our making provision for our Children and Family ; The narrowness of our Fortunes, Disappointments, and Losses ; *These* are the *Topicks* which are always in the mouth of a *Miser*. He *owns*, and unless he shou'd renounce, not only his *Christianity* but *Humanity* too, he cannot do otherwise, his *Obligation to Charity*; and therefore, though he may be asham'd to do it in direct words, he pleads *Insolvency*, and *Poverty*, or something *tantamount*.

Against this I will oppose these two or three Considerations. (1.) This *Plea* reflects dishonourably upon *God*; and seems to insinuate that *God* does require

a Duty of us, either *intolerable*, or *impossible*. (2.) 'Tis generally a *false* and *groundless* pretence. (3.) Where there is some colour of truth in it, it savours rankly of *Folly*, or *Infidelity*.

1. It carries in it a very unreasonable *Reflection upon God*. God does not require of us to *strip* our selves to *clothe the naked*, to *starve* our selves to *feed the hungry*, to *burden* our selves that *others may be eas'd*; nor, in a word, to *impoverish* our selves by our *Charity*. David's Request was a very *modest* one: *We are come unto thee in a good day; give, I pray thee, thy Servants, and thy Son David, whatsoever comes to thy hand: the gleanings of thy Vintage, and of thy Field, the sprinklings of thy Fountain; what thou canst scarce spend without vanity or folly, and wilt not want when thou hast given it. This is that which God is content with as an Alms to the Poor: And he that will not do this, or will not do it without grumbling or murmuring, must needs be concluded to have as little Honour for God, and value for Heaven, as he has Tenderness and Charity for his Neighbour. I do not here advance any Doctrine that can have the least ill Influence upon the Duty I am*  
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recommending to you: I do not discourage any from the most generous Instances of an *Heroick Charity*. If any Man will choose to imitate the Bounty of the *Macedonians*, and be liberal, not only according to his power, but beyond his power: if any man will imitate the Example of Jesus, 2 Cor. 8. 9. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was Rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his Poverty might become Rich: If any man, I say, will come up to these heights, and transcribe the *Divinest* patterns of Charity, I do not doubt, but his Eminent Grace, will have as eminent a Reward: For he that sows bountifully shall reap bountifully. But all this notwithstanding, 'tis certain, that God will accept of lower degrees of Charity, and reward 'em too: that Scripture, as well as Reason, permits us to be dearest to our selves; and allows our Charity to begin at home. This is evident from the general Measures God prescribes our Charity; which have a plain regard to our Capacity. According as God hath prosper'd you, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. 16. 2. According to the Ability which God giveth, says St. Peter, 1 Pet. 4. 11. But fuller yet to my purpose,

pose, if any thing can be fuller, are the words of St. Paul, 2 Cor. 8. 12, 13, 14, *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not: for I mean not that other men be eas'd and you burden'd; but by an equality: that now at this time, your Abundance may be a supply to their want; that their Abundance may be a Supply to your Want; that there may be an equality.* This is enough to shew, that the pretence of *Inability* or *Incapacity* is very frivolous, in the mouths of any that possess any measure of the goods of this World: since God requires nothing of any but according to his *Ability*; and weighs and estimates our *Charity*, not by the *value* of our *Alms*, but by the *readiness* and *cheerfulness* of our *Minds*. Let him, therefore, that cannot cast a *Talent* into the *Treasury*, cast in a *Shekel*; and let him that wants a *Shekel* cast in a *Mite*: *This is a enough, this will satisfie the commands of God.*

2. This Pretence is generally *false*, and *groundless*. Whatever *Necessities*, *Occasions*, or *Losses* men may plead as a Dispensation from the Duty of *Alms*, their Refusals are owing wholly to the *Narrowness*, not of their *Fortunes*, but of their *Minds*.



*Minds. Good men never want ability to do good, and ill men always do or will always pretend they do. Even the poor Widow, when pious too, could find a Mite to cast into the Treasury: and the poor Macedonians, 2 Cor. 8. even in the midst of Affliction and Poverty, abounded in the riches of Liberality: but it was because they abounded in the Joy of the Spirit too. Though churlish Nabal had nothing to spare, yet pious Abigail could find a Present worthy of David, and her self, v. 18. Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready drest, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs; and laid 'em upon Asses. But how hard is it to find the sordid, and the ill-natur'd in those Circumstances, wherein they would judge themselves able to give Alms? Nabal, when he could not part with his Water to David, cou'd find Wine enough to make himself and his guests drunk with.*

*That Nabal, who deny'd bread and flesh to David, and his Followers at the same time held a feast in his house, like the feast of a King; and treated his Friends and Dependants even to Riot and Luxury.*



ry. I would to God there were not too many *Examples* directly *parallel* to *this*, in *our* days, and in *this* *our* City. 'Tis a strange piece of *dissingenuity* before *Man*, and *ingratitude* towards *God*, to plead *Inability* for *Charity*, when the stateliness of our Buildings, the richness of our Furniture, the costliness of our Attire, the Luxury of our Tables, and the Number of our Servants, publish and proclaim our Wealth. But I wou'd to God this were the worst on't. What shame and confusion shou'd I put some to, shou'd I go about to shew, *what* Pride and Ostentation of Life cost *some*, who at the same time deny all Relief to the Naked and Hungry? or *what* vast Sums many expend upon some vile and dishonourable Lust, while at the same time they are deaf to the Importunities of their Brothers Wants and Distresses? Good God! how dare such as these profess *Christianity*, who have utterly extinguish'd that *Charity*, which is the Life and Soul of it? what is this but to expose Religion, and mock God?

3. This Excuse, where there is most colour for it, does yet favour rankly of *Folly*, or *Infidelity*. The two most plausible *Grounds* for this pretence of *Inability*,  
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ty, are *Provision for Children, and Losses and Misfortunes.* (1.) *Provision for Children.* This sounds well at first hearing; but when 'tis closely examin'd, 'tis but a miserable shift. You are making *Provision for your Children*: I demand what to do? To live *Rich, and Great*, suitable to their *Birth and Rank*; to live as their *Parents* have done before 'em. Well, God knows how *well* this is; it may be like an *Epicurean*, or a *Miser*. Ah! how much better were it that the *Children* of such, should live like *Christians*, in *Modesty and Sobriety*, in *Purity and Charity*, in *Meekness and Poverty of Spirit*! Were *Religion* truly planted in the Souls of *Parents*, this wou'd be their *Aim and Ambition* for their *Children*. They wou'd train 'em up to *Vertue*, and to the *Hopes of Heaven*; for this, a *moderate Provision* wou'd serve turn. This wou'd free the *Parent* from much trouble; the *Child* from many a *Temptation*; our *Religion* from dishonour; and revive *Primitive Charity* once again in the World. But let us suppose, for once, that it be not only *lawful*, but *commendable*, to endeavour that our *Children* may be *Rich* after us: what then? is *Uncharitableness* the way to make 'em

'em so? do we, then, indeed rob our Children, of whatever we lend to the Lord? does the Unmercifulness and the Uncharitableness of the Parent more certainly enrich the Child, than the Blessing of God does? and is the neglect or violation of the greatest Duty in our Religion, the best Foundation to build the greatness of a Family on? Certainly, this is the Language of Infidelity, not the Gospel. Were there no Blessing promis'd to Charity, Uncharitableness would yet involve the Sinner in the guilt of Inhumanity: But since there are, and those so many, and so great, to what, but Unbelief, must we impute it, when a Christian has not the Bowels of a Pagan? A second Ground for the Plea of Incapacity is, great Losses and Disappointments. I wish from my heart there were not so just a Reason for this kind of Excuse at this day: but 'tis beyond dispute, that the Wealth of the Nation must be extreamly Exhausted by the cross Accidents, and vast Expences of a long War: nor is it much to be wonder'd at, if the Detriment and Diminution of their Fortunes, oblige good Men to retrench a little from the Bounty and Generosity of their Charity. And yet I cannot

cannot forbear observing to you, that the present state of things calls for greater Degrees of *Charity* than ever. The *Reasons* of this Opinion are very plain. (1.) The *Disappointments* and *Losses* we meet with, if they operate kindly, should the more effectually prevail with us to lay up our *Treasures in Heaven*. For we see there's no security for them or us upon Earth: whereas the Returns of our pious Projects, if they be sincere, can never be intercepted by Fraud or Violence; nor can either War abroad or Conspiracies at home defeat the *Success*, or prevent the *Reward*, of our *Alms*. (2.) This is the best way to preserve our *Nation*: our *Alms* may make some kind of Atonement for our *Sins*: they may avert the Displeasure of God against us, and engage Him in our Patronage and Protection. This is a Doctrine founded in plain Scripture; which makes frequent Promises of Deliverance to the *Righteous* and *Charitable Man*. The *Liberal* deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand, *Isai.* 32. 8. Blessed is he that considereth the poor: The Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the Earth; and thou wilt



not deliver him into the will of his Enemies, Psal. 41. 1, 2. But no portion of Scripture is more full to this purpose, than Psalm 112. from the Beginning to the End. There the Righteous, the Good Man is surrounded with Promises: Promises to himself and to his Posterity: Promises of Wealth and Honour, of Deliverance, of Success, and Victory. And it concludes, *The Wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the Wicked shall perish.* (3.) There was once a time when Christians had all things common; neither said any one that the things he possess'd were his own: and though this heat of Charity soon cool'd, yet St Paul seems to me to invite the Corinthians to something very like it; and to insinuate, that as often as great and pressing Necessities require it, it is but reasonable that a sort of Equality shou'd be re-establish'd among Christians. And to this he applies the Regulation prescrib'd by God to the Israelites in the Distribution of Manna, according as it is written, *He that had gather'd much had nothing over, and he that had gather'd little had no lack,* 2 Cor. 8. 15. Nor can this Doctrine seem strange to any one



one who considers, that there is a close *Conjunction* between *Christians*; they are not only of the *same Family*, and *Heirs* of the *same Hopes*, but also *Members* of the *same Body*; that we are to live by *Faith*; and that whatever good we do here shall be recompenc'd us hereafter a *hundred fold*. Consequently, that the great *Advantage* of *Riches* is, that by the right *Management* of 'em, we may make a good *Provision* for the *time to come*, and lay hold on *Eternal Life*. Now from all this together it manifestly follows, that the *Streights* and *Difficulties* of a *Nation* are so far from *cancelling*, or *weakning* the *Bond of Charity*, that they *strengthen* and *enforce* it: and whatever *encreases* and *multiplies* the *Wants* and *Necessities* of a *People*, does also *multiply* their *Obligations* to *Mercy* and *Liberality*, and *invite* and *press* them to the most *eminent Degrees* of it. Now then if ever, the *Nature* of things requires, that we shou'd be *rich in good works*, *ready to distribute*, *willing to communicate*; that we shou'd have regard each to the *Wants* of others, rather than to our *own Interest*. Now, if ever, the *Face of Affairs* requires that we shou'd be of a *publick*, of a *tender Spirit*; that

we should not seek great things for our selves, but provide for the common Support and Tranquillity, for the common Ease and Peace of our Neighbours. This is what the Love of Jesus, the Love of our Brother, the Love of our Country, and the Desire of a Heaven seems to me to demand of us *this day*.

I come now to the *last* part of Nabal's Excuse.

III. The Demerit and Unworthiness of the Petitioners. Who is David? and who is the Son of Jesse? There be many Servants now adays That break away, &c. Shall I take my bread, &c. and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be? This was, in few words, to tell 'em, that they were a Crew of Vagabonds and idle Beggars, of Criminals and Malefactors; and that therefore it could not become an honest Man to countenance or support 'em. This, I confess, was home, and to the purpose: but it concerns not us. There are indeed in *this City*, and almost all the Parts of the Nation, too many, whose Wants are owing to their Vices, whose Immorality is more deplorable than their Poverty, and whom no Distresses or Judgments can deliver from their Idleness, Sottish-

ness, and Wickedness. But what is this to us? I undertake not the Patronage of such as these, and much less of their Vices. Let the Apostles Rule be observ'd, He that will not work, let him not eat, 1 Thess. 3. 10. And again, 1st. 3. 14. Let ours learn to maintain good works for necessary uses. The Excuse of Nabal here, does not at all affect the Cause I have undertook. The Hospitals, whose Interest, whose Necessities, I recommend to you, have an Eye to Piety, as well as Charity; to the Regulation of Manners, as well as the Relief of Distresses. Here no good Man can be mistaken in the Object, or abus'd in the Conveyance or Administration of his Alms. Here the End is great and good; the Management faithful, diligent, and prudent; and the Success answering all just and reasonable Expectations. They are truly poor, truly miserable and helpless, in behalf of whom I address my Petition to all Rich and Wealthy Men this day. If we have any Bowels of Compassion, if we have any religious Mercy or Tenderneſs in us, certainly, the Sick, the Wounded, the Maim'd, the Impotent, the Distracted, and needy Orphans are a proper Object of it. 'Tis true, Vagrants and Criminals

do here fall under our Care and Charity ; but 'tis in order to their *Reformation* and *Recovery*. In short, there is nothing in *these Hospitals* to be complain'd of, or regretted ; but only *this*, that the Foundation is too narrow for the Superstructure ; that the *settled Income* is not sufficient to defray the *Expences* necessary to carry on their Excellent Designs : That yet *even this* has been much diminish'd by the late dreadful *Fire*, and other ways : and, finally, that those extraordinary Supplies of *Charity*, by which these Foundations shou'd be fed and nourish'd, are too few, too scanty. This is the Reason (which I cannot mention without some trouble) that *Christ's Church-Hospital* has taken in no Children these two last *Easters* ; which was wont, if I remember my Information rightly, to take in *each Easter a hundred*, and upwards. The many and great Advantages which distress'd and helpless Children reap from *that Hospital*, do, methinks, bespeak a peculiar regard for it. But I cannot run out into *Particulars*, 'tis time I shou'd come to an end.

To *summ up* all therefore in a word, *Charity*, as it is the most delightful in *it self*, the most honourable in our

*Reli-*



*Religion*, and the most indispensable and necessary of all the *Graces* of the *Gospel*: so are we press'd to it by the most numerous and powerful *Motives*: Our *Security* and *Prosperity* on *Earth*; our *Happiness* and *Reward* in *Heaven* depends upon it. Our *Obligation* to it, all confess; and none can do otherwise, unless they will disclaim, not their *Christianity* only, but *Humanity* too. But yet still, tis too too much neglected; and this neglect never wants its *Apologies*. I have therefore endeavour'd to prevent, or cut off all frivolous Pretences; and to lay Men open to the Power and Influence of those *Gospel Motives*, by which the *Spirit of God* does so earnestly labour to plant, and cherish this *Virtue* throughout the World. Men may pretend what they will: but whoever is really *Uncharitable*, 'tis *Infidelity* or *Folly*, or some other *Vice*, that makes him so. We plead the *sloth* and *looseness* of others; when in the Bottom, 'tis our own *Vice*, not theirs, which shrinks up and hardens our *Hearts*, and contracts our *Hands*. We plead our *Inabilities*: but the Truth is, we do not want *Wealth*, but *Faith*. We would have every one take care for themselves, as we have done for our



*selves* : but we consider not that this is the Language of *Self love*, and *Arrogance*; that it is utterly irreconcilable with the *Charity*, or *Humility* of a *Christian*. Let us then lay aside all *Excuses*; and let us shew the *World*, that we in good earnest believe the *Gospel*. Let us demonstrate by our *Good Works*; that the *Spirit of Jesus* rules in us; that the *Love of God and Jesus*, and consequently of our *Brother*, is shed abroad in our *Hearts*. Let us act as becomes Men who believe a *Providence*, and a *Judgment to come*; who believe that we shall receive according to what we do in the *Body*: So let us resolve to live and dye in the practice of that *Charity* which is profitable to all things; having the promise of the *Life which now is*, and of that which is to come.

The

## The Ninth Sermon.

### PSALM CXIV. 16.

*Who will rise up for me against the Evil-doers? or who will stand up for me against the Workers of Iniquity?*

**T**HIS Psalm is variously expounded. Some suppose that the Church does here complain of the Persecution of Idolatrous Nations, and implore the Aid of God and Man against them; but whoever reflects on the 7th and 8th Verses, will easily see, that by *Evil-doers* and *Workers of Iniquity* in my Text, the Psalmist does not mean the *Heathen* and *Infidel*, but *Atheistical* and *Impious Israelites*. Others consider *David* in this Psalm as a private Person, and in distress; and think that in the words of my Text he begs the Defence and Protection of *Man*, as in the beginning of the Psalm he had done that of *God*, against his implacable and too powerful Enemies: but whoever will look more closely into the design of

of this *Psalm*, will soon see, that *David* here is not acted by *Fear* but *Zeal*, that 'tis not his own *Enemies*, but the *Enemies of God and Goodness* he sets himself against: Nor is it his own *Defence*, but the *Overthrow of Wickedness* which he aims at. I think therefore we ought to look upon *David* here in a publick Capacity, as a *Prince or Magistrate*; and then as such he deplores the Increase and Confidence of the Wicked: and having fortify'd himself in God by Prayer, he resolves, in the words of my Text, to do the Duty of his Station, to imploy all the power God had given him for the Extirpation of Wickedness, and the Reformation of an impious People, and earnestly invites and calls in to his Assistance all that had either Heart or Ability for such a Work, as being well aware of the great difficulty of it. *Who will rise up for me against the Evil-doers? or who will stand up for me against the Workers of Iniquity?* This is the Sence I prefer, not only for the Reasons before alledg'd, but also because it best becomes the Zeal and Faith of *David*, best suits the Spirit and Genius of several other parallel *Psalms*, and seems plainly to me to have the Countenance of the *Targum* and *Septuagint*

tuagint. In the words thus explain'd we have these three things:

1. *The deplorable State of Israel.* This is easily to be collected from the form and manner of David's expressing himself here, *Who will stand up for me? who will take my part?* As if he should have said, Such is the number and power of the Wicked, that how much soever my heart is set upon a Reformation, I can hardly hope to effect it, without the Concurrence and joint Endeavours of good Men. And yet alas! how little is the Assistance I can reasonably expect of this kind? How few are the sincere Friends of Goodness? How great and general is the Coldness and Indifference which possesses men in the things of God?

2. *The Duty of the Magistrate.* This is plainly imply'd here, and is, to curb and restrain Wickedness, and to promote a general Reformation.

3. *The Duty of all good People.* Which is, as far as in them lies, to assist and encourage the Magistrate in this good Work. I begin with the first of these:

1. *The deplorable State of Israel.* The Psalmist does not here reckon up all the Sins which then polluted the Land; but



but only observes to what *height* Wickedness was grown. Impudence and Atheism, or something equivalent to it, and Crimes of no common size now reign'd and rag'd every where. Sin was no longer the *work of darkness*. Transgressors were above the fear both of Shame and Laws: they had thrown off all Reverence for the *God of Jacob*, and hop'd in a little time to see all others do so too. Though they were such as were not to be endur'd in any Community, yet were they so far spread, and had so advanc'd themselves into places of Power and Profit, that they were in a Condition to oppress the Godly, and to project the utter Extirpation of Vertue, and the Establishment of Wickedness in its room, by their Influence and Authority. All this is plainly to be inferr'd from the *Psalmist's Description* of those times: *Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things, and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.*  
And



And v. 20. *Shall the Throne of Iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which frameth Mischief by a Law.*

This was indeed a miserable, a desperate state of things; and yet we have reason to fear that our own is as bad; nay, considering the Means and Motives we have enjoy'd, and still do, worse. Our Wickedness, both in practice and principle, is at last arriv'd at the utmost maturity it is capable of. It is not lukewarmness in practice; 'tis not too great a latitude in the Faith, 'tis not Disputes about things indifferent that we now complain of, but downright Apostacy and Infidelity. The utter Subversion of all Religion is now threatned by Atheism and Deism, by Clubs and Combinations of Wretches, who believe either no God at all, or none but such a one whose being and Attributes consist well enough with the worst of Vices. Order and Decency, Peace and Unity, Church Discipline and Government, are things that we have long ago accusom'd ourselves to contemn and slight; but now we are come to treat the Gospel it self as a cunningly devised Fable, and Vertue and a publick Spirit as things that none have an inward

ward Esteem for but *Fools* and *Superstitions*. Now when these are our *Principles*, when these are openly abetted and industriously spread in Publick and Private, in Print and Conversation, to the reproach of *Christianity*, and the scandal and shame of *Magistracy* and *Government*, what *Morals* are we to expect amongst us? what, but just such as we find? We were *long ago* Lewd and Carnal, Factionous and Contentious, Admirers of the Pomp and Ostentation of Life. But these are the common and usual Vices of prosperity in every Age: we have *now* advanc'd much further. We are False, and Base and Cowardly, Corrupt and Perfidious. There is no Truth, no Justice, no Integrity amongst us: much less any Love of our Country, or Zeal for any thing that is commendable or lovely. *Before* we were seduc'd by Prosperity against Conscience: but there was yet hope, because something of Conscience remain'd: but *now* alas! Conscience is look'd upon as a Notion fit only to awe and scare the Weak and Simple. *Before*, we were too far estrang'd from that *Purity* and *Peaceableness*, which are the inseparable Properties of *heavenly wisdom*: but *now* we are as far estrang'd from

from common *Honesty* and *Truth*, without which, I will not say *Religion*, but even *Human Society* and *Trade* cannot subsist. These are the glorious Fruits of *Atheism* and *Deism*, and I know not what late *Discoveries* and *Innovations* in *Religion* and *Politicks*. And all this is but the natural course of things; for ill *Principles* do as naturally breed *Immorality*, as *Immorality* does *Ruin*: according to that of the *Psalmist*, *The Fool hath said in his heart there is no God*; and then it follows, *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good*. *Psal. 14. 1.*

This now is our state: how dangerous, how deplorable a one, no Man can be insensible, who is in any degree thoughtful and serious. And where is it now we are to seek for redress? To whom are we to apply our selves for *Reformation*? Shall we despair, Shall we quit the design of it, and, forbearing all attempts of our own, leave the Work wholly to God? If so, we need not doubt but God will one day or other assert his Truth, and vindicate his Honour; but it will be in our Ruine, not *Reformation*. For when God has try'd us long under the richest means of Grace,  
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the fructifying Influences of his Word, Sacraments, and Spirit, and we bring forth nothing but *Briars and Thorns*; when he has *exercis'd* us long under the various Discipline of Judgment and Mercy, and we bring forth nothing but Fraud and Falshood, Violence and Oppression; what are we to expect from God, but that he shou'd accomplish upon us all the *Woes* denounc'd against *Jerusalem* in the like case, *Isai. 5.* and sum'd up v. 5, 6? And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my *Vineyard*: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste, it shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the Clouds that they rain no rain upon it. I doubt not but you will be of opinion with me that we ought to prevent this Sentence by some Endeavours of our own for *Reformation*. To whom then shall we address our selves? To the *Masters of Families*? 'Tis true, they can do much, and much one day will be requir'd of 'em. But alas! when the day has been spent in cares and drudgery, the evening is commonly spent in mirth, or wine, or worse:



so that little, I doubt, is to be expected from hence. Shall we then fix our hopes upon *Religious Societies*, confederated and enter'd into for this very purpose? I am glad, I confess, to see a *Spirit of Religion* stirring and moving any where among us; and I know not how far *this* *leaven* may go towards the fermenting the *whole lump*. But alas! They do not possess all those *Advantages* which are necessary for so great a work. Shall we then expect Reformation from the *Clergy*? God, I confess, has set them as *Shepherds* and *Watchmen* over his Flock, and it cannot be deny'd but we may and ought to do much *more* than we do; I pray God make us sensible of the great *account* we are one day to render of our *Stewardship*. But alas? you cannot be ignorant, that *this* is one of the crying Sins we *complain* of, that the great Endeavours of this Age are to render the *Ministry* of this Body of Men *useless* and *unserviceable*; by malicious slanders and other ill methods to extinguish all Reverence for their Persons and Office; and by pernicious Errors to defeat the power and efficacy of their Doctrine: Nor can you be ignorant how far these have succeeded. From

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whom then are we to expect a *Reformation*? From the *King*? He indeed is invested with power enough, and God has done great things for him. I hope he is truly sensible of it, and has it upon his heart to make the best returns he can. Especially since our *Religion* and *Liberty*, without this, are far from being secur'd, our *Deliverance* far from being completed: and whatever honour he has himself acquir'd either by *War*, or by this *Peace*, it will want its greatest Beauty and Perfection; nay, I fear, be utterly blasted, if it be not ripen'd and consummated by the *Glory* of a *Reformation*. But after all, will not he be ready justly to take up the words of the *King of Israel* in my Text, and in the sense I have given of them, *Who will rise up for me against the wicked*? &c. The Burthen is too great for one alone, were he great as *Moses* himself: therefore is the *Civil Power* Communicated in lesser Streams and Branches, from the *Root*, from the *Fountain*, from the *Supream Magistrate*, to *Subordinate* ones. On you then is devolv'd a mighty part of this Duty. From you therefore, the *Magistrates* of this *City*, we are to expect strenuous and zealous Attempts for a *Reformation*. The eyes

eyes of all good Men may be reasonably upon you. The *Station* you hold, the *power* you participate, lay great *Obligations* upon you, and give you great *Opportunities*. From you therefore God, the King, and the *People* may justly demand and expect very great *Advances* in the work of *Reformation*. All this will more fully appear from my *second General*; which is,

II. *The Duty of the Magistrate*. That this is to curb and quell the Ungodly, and cut off wickedness from the Cities of our God, will be plain to any one that shall consider the End of Civil Power and the Influence of Vertue. If we enquire why God has put the Sword into the hand of the Civil Magistrate, why the Supream, Universal Monarch of Heaven and Earth has communicated a Ray of his Authority to Man, *Scripture* and *Reason* will soon inform us. St. Paul, *Rom. 13.* after he has asserted the Origin of Civil Power to be from God, and from thence inferr'd the *Obligation* of Inferiors to *Obedience*, not only for *wrath*, but also for *Conscience sake*; he does at large describe the Office of a Magistrate, consisting in what I have laid down, v. 3. 4. 5. St. *Peter* advances the very same Do-

ctrine, only a little more compendiously, 1 Pet. 2. 13, 14. Submit your selves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the King, as Supreme, or unto Governours, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of Evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

If we consult Reason, this will soon tell us, that that is truly the great End of Civil Power, which when attain'd, the Community arrives at the greatest happiness it is capable of, and without which all other Advantages are either useless or pernicious. And this is certainly Religion. This is the Spring of all wise Counsels and Conduct, and of all handsome and worthy Actions. This inspires the Magistrate with Wisdom, Integrity and Zeal for publick Good. This produces Obedience in the Subject towards their Prince, and Charity towards one another. This begets and nourishes Sobriety and Courage in the Souldier, and Truth and Justice in the Trader. This is, in a word, the only solid Foundation of a People's strength and glory: for it gives us Peace and Unity, and Wealth at home, and Reputation abroad. But

on the other hand, as *Righteousness exalts a Nation*, so *Sin is the reproach of any People*. This blasts all our Secular Advantages, and defeats all the hopes the most promising Circumstances can raise in us. *Wealth* without Religion does but invite *Invasions*, and render us a richer Prey. The strength and Skill of *Arms* without Religion, naturally tends to *Tyranny* or *Civil Tumults*: or if a *Martial Genius* and Power be wisely or luckily *diverted* on *foreign Wars*, this in effect is but to *oppress our selves* in order to *infest others*. As to *Peace*, there is *no peace*, saith my God, unto the wicked. This is as true with respect to the Peace of *Publick Societies*, as to the Calm and Tranquility of a *private Bosom*. Without Religion, *Selfishness* and *Sensuality*, *Lust*, *Passion* and *Fancy*, must be the predominant Principles in us; and these are restless and humorous, dividing, contentious and weakning ones. They naturally *embroil* us with neighbouring Nations, or with one another, and make us at once *unfit for war*, and *incapable of peace*. In one word, were Religion exterminated, and Wickedness substituted in its room, without any other Evil or Enemy to attack us, we



should unavoidably *sink* and *perish* under the weight and persecution of our *own Vices*.

And yet, after all this, I have made you but a very *imperfect* Representation of the different Influence of Religion and Wickedness. I must put you in mind further, that there is a God, a God who judgeth and ruleth the Earth; that the Sins of any Nation do certainly subject it to his wrath and displeasure, and their *Virtues* entitle it to his favour and protection. What the Prophet published to Judah, is in effect the standing Rule of the Divine Government over all Nations. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the Land: But if you refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the Sword; for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Mai. i. 19, 20. And the following words are so applicable to us, that they may justly fill us with Melancholy apprehensions. How is the faithful City become an Harlot? It was full of Judgment, Righteousness lodged in it, but now, Murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine is mixt with water. Thy Princes are rebellious and companions of Thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards. They judge not the



the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah! I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies. Nor let us flatter our selves with security, because God hath sheath'd the Sword by an undeserved Peace. Unless we repent and reform, he can soon draw it again, and turn the point upon our more sensible and vital parts: or if he don't do this, he wants no Artillery, no Instruments of Vengeance; he needs but restrain the Influences of Heaven, or let loose the Elements upon us, and we shall soon perish by Deluges or Conflagrations, by Earthquakes, Plagues, or Famines.

Thus I have plainly prov'd the Proposition laid down, that the great Business and Duty of the Civil Magistrate is, to maintain and advance Righteousness, and to cut off and extirpate Ungodliness. For I have shew'd that this is the great End for which God confers Power and Authority upon him: that Righteousness and Wickedness have necessarily a mighty Influence upon the Prosperity or Misery of every Community: and lastly, that the Favour of God is the necessary Con-

sequence of the one, and his Displeasure of the other: And *this alone* is at any time enough to make us a *happy or unhappy Nation*. The Result of all is briefly this, the good of the People is the great Concern of the Magistrate; and therefore it is as plain, that, 'tis the Duty of the Magistrate to endeavour at *this time a Reformation*, as it is that the good of the People depends upon it. From this Doctrine thus clear'd will follow these two or three plain Inferences.

1. Now that we see the Duty of the Magistrate, 'tis easie to infer what kind of Men are qualifi'd to be Magistrates, namely such as *Jerbo* recommended to *Moses*, Exod. 18. 21. *Able men, fearing God, men of truth, and hating covetousness. Able men*; Men of Rank and Substance, Men of a great and just Reputation and Interest, founded on known and solid Vertues. *Fearing God*; this is the foundation of all Wisdom and Vertue; 'tis impossible that *such* shou'd be either Enemies to Wickedness, or hearty Friends to Righteousness; whose Minds are not possess'd with a due and awful sense of God. *Men of truth*; i. e. of Uprightness and Integrity; that cannot be warp'd by Popularity or Ambition, nor influ-

influenced by Friends or Parties, by any selfish fears or hopes: but will readily pursue their Duty in defiance of all worldly Considerations to the contrary. *Having Covetousness*; Selfishness is a flat contradiction to a Publick Spirit, and 'tis impossible that the Sordid and Covetous shou'd ever be capable of any thing so great and lovely as Religion and Honour. *These are the Characters which fit Men for the Chair; these are the Men whose Example will derive Force and Authority on their Zeal for Reformation.*

2. From hence 'tis plain that they who choose such Men for Magistrates as are not qualify'd for it, betray the trust which God and the Government have repos'd in 'em: That they are in effect Enemies to their Religion and their Country; and the Grounds they proceed upon, whatever they be, can never be wise nor good. The great and excellent *Ends of God* can never be serv'd by *ill Men*; by Men whose *Practices obstruct* that Vertue which their *Power* should promote, and are so far from being an Ornament to their Station, that they are a *Dishonour* to it, and serve only to bring *Magistracy* it self into contempt.

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3dly and lastly, Since *Magistrates* are the *Ministers of God*, and the great End of Government is to restrain Vice and propagate Vertue, 'tis plain that they must at the last day render an *account* of their Office to God, and stand or fall as they have answer'd or disappointed this Expectation of God. It will not then be consider'd what *expence* they have made, what port or *figure* they have maintain'd, or what party they adher'd to; but how heartily they have sought the good of the people committed to their charge: which is, in other words, how zealously they have persecuted wickedness, and espous'd the interest of Religion. The *Psalmist* therefore puts *Magistrates* in mind, that God heedfully *superintends* and *observes* their deportment, in order to judge 'em. God standeth in the *Congregation of the mighty*: he judgeth among the Gods. *Psal.* 82. And by laying before 'em the vast importance of Magistracy to the World, for 'tis the support of it, he suggests to 'em how great, how dreadful a punishment must be justly due to negligence or corruption in it. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the Earth are out of course, v. 5.

And



And at last, lest they should flatter themselves that their power and greatness can shelter and skreen them from Vengeance; he puts 'em in mind that they are mortal, and can no more escape judgment than they can death: *I have said ye are Gods, and all of you are Children of the most High; but ye shall die like Men, and fall like one of the Princes*, v. 6, 7. And as it is appointed for Rulers as well as private Men once to die, so consequently to appear in judgment. And what a dreadful account will he have to give at the last Audit, who has been selfish or selfish; who has prostituted his power to gratifie some vile Lust or Passion, and betray'd the honour and interest of Justice and Vertue to serve some By end?

To prevent this sad issue of things, give me leave to lay before you the Example of an excellent Governour, which I would earnestly desire you to follow in proportion to your Endowments and Power; it is that of David in *Psal. 101*. He there proposes to himself three things, and I do not doubt but he did steadily pursue 'em throughout his Reign. 1. He resolves upon the practice of the strictest vertue in his own person; without which he well knew he cou'd not expect the pro-

propitious Presence of God with him, either to guide or bless him. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me, v. 2, 3.* Next he resolves to purge his Court of all wicked and ungodly Men, and to plant it with such as fear God: to cashier the peevish and ambitious, the treacherous and fraudulent, the factious and contentious; and to receive into his friendship and service Men of Truth and Integrity, Lovers of Religion and their Country; and therefore sure to be faithful to both. *A froward heart shall depart from me, I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will I not suffer; mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the Land, that they may dwell with me: and so on.* Lastly he resolves to put the Laws against all notorious Offenders in vigorous execution. And the truth is, the Civil Laws of Moses are full and severe enough against all wilful and scandalous Crimes, and needed not any Arbitrary Power to supply

supply their defects: So that the *Psalmist* might very well express this his sence in the manner he does; *I will early destroy all the wicked of the Land, that I may cut off all wicked doers from the City of the Lord.* v. 8. O bright Example! O wise and holy Resolutions! Happy will this Land be, when God shall vouchsafe to raise up such a Spirit as this in our Prince, and in all that are put in Authority under him. Certainly all that have any serious thoughts about Religion and the Influence of it, must earnestly desire to see that Day, and make it the daily subject of their importunate Prayers. Which minds me of my Third and Last Head.

III. The Duty of all good People, to serve and assist the Magistrate in his Endeavours for Reformation. Which is here call'd, *The standing up with him against the Workers of Iniquity.* I need not surely prove this to be our Duty. We cannot save our own Souls without doing what God has put in our power towards the saving those of others: without this we must not pretend to Religion. For what a strange sort of Religion is that which has neither Zeal for God nor Charity for Man: and he can be suppos'd

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to have but very little of either, who will not contribute what he can to the maintenance and propagation of Righteousness, and the suppressing Wickedness. It often happens, and it is a deplorable face of things when it does so, that the great, and the Rich, Men of place and power, are the Fautors and Abettors of Sin; not only doing ill themselves, but delighting in those that do so. It often happens that Vice has gain'd that Ascendant and Authority in a Nation (unhappy the Nation where it has;) that it defies, not only all the Exhortations and Denunciations of the *Pulpit*, but the Force and Majesty of *Laws* too. In this case, not *subordinate Magistrates* only, but even *Princes* themselves will need the counsel, the industry, the help and service of others; and shall we be accounted the Servants of God, and Lovers of Vertue, if we express no concern or zeal for either upon such an occasion?

If it be said, we do not dispute our *Obligation* to do what we can in such a *Case* as this is; but what is it that we can do? I answer, I do not doubt but that frequent *Opportunities* will offer themselves, when you may seasonably testify your good will to it. But besides  
*these,*



these, there are some general ways of doing it, to which we are all equally tyed. Such are, for instance, a cheerful Obedience to the Magistrate, a fair and candid construction of his Conduct, a just honour and Esteem for him on the account of what he does well, fervent and constant Prayers to God for a Blessing upon him, that he may be endow'd with a *Spirit of Wisdom and Counsel*, of Courage and Constancy, and may be ever under the protection and guidance of God. Nay, there is something more than all this that we *can* do: we may reform our selves, we may employ much care about our *Families*, we may countenance and encourage the *Publick Worship*, by our constant Attendance upon it, and an awful and reverent Deportment at it, and we may, in all *Conversations*, signify our *dislike* of every thing that has any tincture of *Impiety*. By this means we shall make the work of the *Magistrate* very easie, we shall strengthen his Hands, and confirm him in his just Resolutions; and we shall give check to the confidence of Sinners, and Sin will again sneak and hide it self in Dens and Darkness, when it meets with that open and honest opposition which  
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it ought, from all that make profession of Christianity. Do you yet desire *more particular Directions*? consider *by what Arts ill Men* endeavour to propagate *Wickedness*, and from hence you will soon see how you are to *obviate* and *countermine* 'em. Are *they* industrious to advance ill Principles, and to subvert Primitive Christianity? we must contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints, and be industrious to keep it firm upon its first grounds. Are *they* for cashiering Churches, Liturgies, Priests, and Sacraments? It is even from hence plain, that 'tis the Interest of Religion that we shou'd pay a just regard to 'em. Do *they* combine to blast and oppress by Calumnies and Ill Arts all good Men, and especially those who are more peculiarly engag'd in the Defence of Religion? we must encourage, vindicate, support, and honour such. Do *they* labour to divide and embroil us? we must sincerely follow after those things that make for peace. Finally, are *they* zealous to promote ill Men? we must be so to set up good ones. I will now sum up all and conclude.

Our City and Nation are miserably corrupted and debauch'd; and while they are so, we can never promise our selves  
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Prosperity or Safety. God has, 'tis true, at this time given us a *Peace*; 'tis another *Trial*, 'tis another *Call*; we indeed may make it a great and lasting *Blessing*. But alas! unless a *Reformation* follow, *Peace* does but skin our Wounds: we bleed inwardly, and our very *Vitals* waste. What will it avail us to repair our *Losses*, if at the same time we pursue and multiply our *Sins*? What will it signify that we are deliver'd from the Fear of a *Mortal Enemy*, when, on this supposal, God must still have a *Controversie* with our *Land*? A *Reformation* then you will all acknowledge necessary: and certainly, if you consider what Influence the Conduct and Morals of this City have upon the *whole Nation*; and what an account both *Magistracy* and *People* have one day to give of their Ability to do good; you cannot but conclude that it ought to begin from hence, and to be strenuously prosecuted by the joynt Endeavours of the Magistrates and others of this *great*, and if you will do your Duty, I doubt not but I shall soon be able to add, *flourishing* and *happy City*. Whether now you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I must leave that to you; but *Heaven and Earth* will one time wit-

ness that I this Day have sincerely put you in mind of your Duty. If you neglect it, certainly your Prosperity and Honour will be a very little, or a very short Blaze. For are they not the words of God in a much like case? *them that honour me, I will honour: and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed?* 1 Sam. 2. 30. But alas! suppose our Temporal Prosperity should be prolong'd? what then? Is there not a day, a terrible day coming, when Parties and Passions shall be no more, when the Strength of Sides and Factions shall be scatter'd and dispers'd for ever, when all the little Politicks and subtilties of Man shall be miserably exploded and expos'd, and *the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day?* Then shall Electors and Elected appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and give an Account of your trust, and then shall ye all receive according to what you have done in the Body, whether it be good or evil. Ah! Day joyful to the Righteous, but dismal to the Wicked! I will add one short Remark, and I have done. The Language of the Text seems to me to be wholly Metaphorical, consisting of Military Terms: this indeed suggests to us that Reformation is a Work wherein you must expect to be encounter'd with great



great *Opposition* and many *Difficulties*.  
But let *no Man's heart fail him for this*;  
The *Cause* is the *Lord's*, and whoever en-  
gages in it, fights under the *banner of*  
*God*, enjoys the *Prayers of good Men*, the  
*Ministry of Angels*, and the *Aid of the*  
*Holy Spirit* ; and may with a holy *Assu-*  
*rance* use the *words*, and expect the *Success*  
which *Moses* did when the *Ark* set forth.  
*Arise, O God, and let thine Enemies be scat-*  
*ter'd* ; Let them also that hate thee flee be-  
fore thee.

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## The Tenth Sermon.

JOHN. XVIII. 36.

*My Kingdom is not of this World.*

**T**Hough our Saviour came not into the World to Embroil and Destroy, but to save that which was lost, not to Enslave and Oppress, but to redeem Mankind from the Bondage of Sin; and all those evils both Temporal and Eternal which must needs attend it, and though he advanc'd and carried on this design by the demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, by the most surprising Miracles, by but a little less-surprising Wisdom, and by an unspotted purity of Life; yet see what human nature is, when fermented by Prejudice and Passion, by a blind Zeal and Faction: The most perfect virtue could not secure him from Reproach, and Calumny; nor a boundless Charity from Hatred and Persecution: At first they represented him either as a *Madman* or *Demeniack*, or as a *Wine-bibber* or a *Glutton*,

*Glutton*, a friend to *Publicans* and Sinners; converting one while the strictness of his Virtue, and the warmth of his Zeal, another while his very Goodness and Charity, his Gentleness and Sweetness into a Crime; but afterwards when their Rage, and Jealousie, their Envy and Malice increas'd with his Reputation and Authority, they now form designs not only against his Honour, but his Life too: They bring against him another sort of Accusation, they charge him with Treason and Rebellion, with an Ambitious design to undermine the Power of *Cæsar*, and set up himself for a King; and so consequently that his Humility was only a popular Artifice, his Virtue only a Disguise for his Ambition, and all his Miracles but so many Cheats and Impostures, Serving to promote this one End. To this accusation (for I meddle not now with the former) our Saviour answers in my Text, that he was a King indeed, and that a Kingdom did expect him, but a very different one from that of *Cæsar's*: That the Grandeur of this World was a thing beneath him, Ambition too mean a passion for his Soul; he had, he confess'd a design upon Mankind, but it was on-

ly to make 'em Wise, to make 'em Free, to make 'em Good, to make 'em Great and Happy; in a word to make 'em sharers with him in a Kingdom, *Incorruptible, and Undeiled, that fadeth not away, referved in Heaven*, for him and all fuch as would imitate him, and adhere to him.

This is a fhort account of the Senfe and Reason of thefe Words, *My Kingdom is not of this World*. I defign not to confine them to a Personal Vindication of the Honour or Sovereignty of our Lord; but to extend their Senfe fo far as to give all the faithful followers of Chrift, an intereft in them; and this you will acknowledge I have a fufficient warrant to do, when you call to mind that the Kingdom of Chrift and of *Chriftians* is one and the fame: that the whole Tenour of the Gofpel affures every man that he has in his degree and proportion, the fame joy, the fame Crown and Reward, *fet before him* which Chrift had. Thus Eph. 2. 6. St. Paul tells us, *God has rais'd us up, and made us fit together with Chrift in heavenly places*. Thus our Saviour Rev. 3. 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant to fit with me in my Throne, even as I alfo overcame and am fet with my*  
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*Father, in his Throne: And Luke 12. 32. Fear not little Flock, for 'tis your Fathers good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* The Doctrine then that I will observe to you from these words, is this, That there is a great and Glorious reward for all Righteous and good Men.

Now to illustrate and fortify this proposition, and to imprint it as deeply as I can upon your minds, I will make good these 2 or 3 things.

1. *That Religion cannot be its own reward.*
2. *That this present World cannot afford us a sufficient one,*
3. *That how wonderful and surprizing soever an Eternal Kingdom may seem to us, yet have we sufficient grounds to expect nothing less, in reward of a Righteous Life.*

**S. 1.** Religion cannot be its own Reward.

'Tis on all hands allowed, that Vertue stands in need of an encouragement, and the Reason of this is very Evident: Human Nature is corrupt and frail, and Temptations numerous and strong; vertue consequently must frequently consist in Instances of Mortification and Self-denial, and must contend with much Opposition and great Difficulties: God therefore with infinite Wisdom and

ly to make 'em Wise, to make 'em Free, to make 'em Good, to make 'em Great and Happy; in a word to make 'em sharers with him in a *Kingdom, Incorruptible, and Undeified, that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven*, for him and all such as would imitate him, and adhere to him.

This is a short account of the Sense and Reason of these Words, *My Kingdom is not of this World*. I design not to confine them to a Personal Vindication of the *Honour or Sovereignty* of our Lord; but to extend their Sence so far as to give all the faithful followers of Christ, an interest in them; and this you will acknowledge I have a sufficient warrant to do, when you call to mind that the Kingdom of Christ and of *Christians* is one and the same: that the whole Tenour of the Gospel assures every man that he has in his degree and proportion, the same joy, the same *Crown* and Reward, *set before him* which Christ had. Thus Eph. 2. 6. St. Paul tells us, *God has rais'd us up, and made us sit together with Christ in heavenly places*. Thus our Saviour Rev. 3. 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my Throne, even as I also overcame and am set with my Fa-*

*Father, in his Throne: And Luke 12. 32. Fear not little Flock, for 'tis your Fathers good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* The Doctrine then that I will observe to you from these words, is this, That there is a great and Glorious reward for all Righteous and good Men.

Now to illustrate and fortify this proposition, and to imprint it as deeply as I can upon your minds, I will make good these 2 or 3 things.

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Goodness accommodating the Gospel to our state and nature, has taken care to furnish us with an abundant consolation and support under all the Tryals and Hardships which our Duty can bring upon us; and that is by proposing an *unspeakable reward*: But the efficacy of this method is very much weakened, one while by talking too refinedly and subtilly; another while, too grossly and carnally. On this Subject the *Stoicks* taught, that virtue was its own reward, being a State of Health, and Strength, and peace, desirable for its own sake, and many Christians have advanced the same notion in other Words, telling us that *God* and *Goodness* are to be beloved for themselves; that the virtue which is raised and cherished by the prospect of an Eternal recompence, is Mean and Mercenary: but all this is Romantick Stuff, a Flight of pious fancy towering far above the state of Human Nature, and this World; God indeed is infinitely lovely, but 'tis his infinite goodness that makes him so destitute of this, *Omnipotence*, *Omniscience*, and *whatever else*; would be to us poor frail and guilty Creatures, not Amiable, but *Terrible* perfections. Holiness has indeed



indeed a beauty in it, but to an enlighten'd Eye, and purified heart: Virtue 'tis true, is taking and agreeable to a perfect mind; but ah! were there no reward for virtue, what shou'd raise groveling and corrupted nature to Perfection? What shou'd inspire us with a resolution strong enough to vanquish all the difficulties that block up the way to it.

But does not Peace, and Liberty Pleasure and Honour flow naturally from Virtue and Goodness? and are not these sufficient motives to it; I answer, as things stand now under a Gospel dispensation, 'tis plain these are the happy fruits of a solid Virtue; and they have no small influence upon the Conduct of Human Life; but were there no reward for virtue, I doubt these wou'd be but very weak and inconsiderable inducements to it; and we shou'd soon see no virtues at all, or at least such only as were, barren and undergrown, some faint resemblances and shadows of true goodness, some short liv'd Blossoms springing from some rare and excellent temper, and under the propitious Aspect of some very prosperous circumstances: First as to *Peace*, as the *Terrours of Conscience*, were there

there no Punishment for Sin, would be very blunt, so I doubt the peace of conscience, were there no reward for virtue wou'd be but dull and sluggish. As to *Liberty* or Dominion over our own affections, were there no reward for virtue, there wou'd be as little gain'd by our *spiritual Liberty*, as lost by our *Servitude*: Nor is it easie to see what crime or mischief there were in doting upon a trifle, if there were nothing great or substantial to engage my Passion. As to *Pleasure*, 'tis true, the pleasure of Religion is now great; *for we rejoyce with joy unspeakable, and hopes full of Glory*; but whatever shou'd cut off these hopes, wou'd extinguish our pleasure too, and we shou'd be so far from triumphing and glorying in *Religion*, that like the Disciples upon the Crucifixion of our Lord, our virtues would disband and sculk, and our pleasure wou'd wither and droop, hang the head, shrink and dry up to nothing. Lastly as to *Honour*, by which I here mean the preserving the dignity of our minds, and so maintaining our credit with our selves, 'tis I confess, a treasure to be valued by every Man that wou'd be happy, far above any earthly consideration:

ration: But what then, were there not a reward and a great one too for virtue it would puzzle us to resolve what wisdom there were in a great many difficult and hazardous instances of it: And where the *Wisdom* of an action is disputable, the *Honour* of it must be so too; and I doubt it would be a very hard task to prove it wise to crucifie the appetites and inclinations of our nature, and to wage a perpetual war with our selves in this world, had we not our eye fixt upon a state wherein we shall abundantly gratify a Nobler nature, and more generous as well as more vigorous Appetites. Thus having made it out that Virtue stands in need of a Reward to encourage it, and that it cannot be its own Reward, it remains therefore that there must be some other; which what it is, is next to be enquired. And here we may easily resolve,

*S. 2dly.* That this World cannot afford a sufficient and proper Reward of virtue. I speak of the World as it now is, and do not concern my self about its restitution to a *Paradisical* state, nor enquire into *St. Peter's new Heaven* and *new Earth*, after the conflagration of the old. 'Tis true *Godliness* we are told  
1 Tim.

1 Tim. 4. 8. *Is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.* But then 'tis as true that these promises are designed not as the supream but Inferiour and subordinate motives to virtue; that Temporal good things are not to be the ultimate end of excellent persons, but the means and instruments of virtue; and lastly that this kind of promises are ever made with this tacit condition, If it be expedient for the Glory of God and the good of his servants. Whence it is that the dispensations of providence in this respect, are oftentimes very obscure and mysterious, and are to be entertain'd by us with *Reverence and Submission*, not *Confidence* or *Curiosity*: For who is able often to find out the Reason why Blooming virtue, the Joy and Hope of all who know it, is cut off by an early Death, *when the Wicked prolong their lives in their Wickedness*, why *the Race is not to the swift, nor the Battle to the Strong*, but time and chance undermine the hopes which wisdom virtue and industry had built? These things being premised, I will now proceed to shew that this World cannot be the Reward of virtue. Of this we have  
very



very pregnant proofs, taken either, 1. from the *Worthlessness*, or 2. from the *Unsuitableness* of it, to a renewed and Sanctified nature.

I. It's *Worthlessness*. How contemptible a thing is that World wherein the most valuable things are so Insignificant, that it is almost indifferent whether we possess them in *Reality* or in *Fancy* and *Opinion*? How often do we think our selves happy in the friendship of those who in the bottom have nothing but coldness and indifference for us? How often do we flatter our selves with mighty interests, which when we come to lay any stress upon them, do miserably deceive us? and to spare the trouble of multiplying more instances, I will give you one general Argument of this truth. Let us but exchange our false notions of *Wealth*, of *Power* and *Honour* and such like, for true, and we shall soon discern of what little importance these things are to us: Let us be but thoroughly perswaded that *wealth* is a competency of such things as minister to the interest of Virtue, and to the real not Fantastick Ends or Appetites of nature, that *Honour* is the Lustre and reflection of great and good Actions,

ons, that *Power* is the dominion over our own Passions and such like; and we shall soon see that our happiness depends not in the least on those things which are the Idols and ambition of the World; and can such things be the great and sole reward of Righteousness? it cannot be.

Shall I insist in the next place on the confusion and uncertainty of all Worldly things, shall I shew you that there is no Good, pure and sincere, but is Dashed and Diluted with evil; how easy a task were this, how many disappointments do sowre our pleasures, how many difficulties clog Business and Imployment? How is the Day of Prosperity blurr'd and scratched, by great and petty misfortunes, and the Day of triumph often stain'd by funeral Blacks and Tears? How does contempt and insolence ruffle and discompose a little fortune, great disasters and calamities incumber and imbitter a great one? Even the Altar is not free from reproach and slander, nor the Throne from cares and dangers, our misfortunes or our follies divide the closest bonds, and even friendship it self is often tainted or blasted by cross accidents

cidents or Jealousies, Whispers and Surmises.

But were there no evil mixt with the good of Life, and did *Prosperity* and *Glory* follow the triumphant Chariot of *Virtue* like Slaves in Chains, in Chains every Link where of were an irreversibile decree of an *Almighty Power*, yet still there is one Argument behind, that in spight of all this, would prove all vanity, and that is *Death*, against which there is no Defence, no Preservative, not *Beauty*, *Greatness*, *Wisdom* nor *Goodness* it self, though guarded too by almost universal Love, and Prayers, and Tears, can secure mortal Majesty from *Death*; where is it then that our Desires can fix or center upon Earth? We have seen indeed there may be something lovely, but nothing stable, nothing lasting; for what is worst of all, we have not only Death to fear, but an immature and too too early Death; this indeed we can account for by a Life to come, but without it, I should be ready to pronounce the sentence of *Vanity* and *Vexation*, not only upon all the admir'd things of this World, but even upon *Wisdom* and *Vertue* too.

But

But the World is not only mean and worthless, but,

2dly. *Unsuitable* to a sanctified Nature, and therefore unfit to be the reward of Righteousness; Religion trains us up to War and Conflicts, to Watchfulness and Labour, to Mortification and Hardships; it obliges us to a defiance of this World, and fortifies us against the soft and inveigling pleasures of the Body; it teaches us, that we can never establish a true and lasting Peace, but on the conquest of both. That we can find no rest but in Christ, and *in that poverty of Spirit, and purity of Heart*, of which he was himself the great Example; That as God is the Fountain of all our Happiness, so he alone must be the Object of our Love, and the Center of our Desires and Hopes. What Pleasure now, what Grandure is there that can engage or captivate a Soul form'd by these Principles, and rais'd into this divine Temper? 'Twas a poor and gross fancy of the *Jews*, that the Messiah should come, and raise to himself an universal Monarchy upon the overthrow of the *Roman* Empire, and other worldly Powers. Alas! There needed no *Prophet*, no *Illumination*, no

*Super-*



*Supernatural* Grace to prepare and fit mankind for such a State; to qualify us for this, the Soul has no need of refinement, but an alloy; we are too great for this, even in a state of Nature, how much more when renewed and sanctified? The very *Pagans* as often as they did recollect themselves, and enter seriously into the philosophy of human Nature and this corruptible World, did see well enough that the Body was not a proper instrument for the Soul, nor this World the proper and ultimate object of it, and therefore concluded that it could not be happy till it enter'd into a better World, and had either a better Body or none at all. 'Tis plain then, that the Kingdom of Believers cannot be of this World, that nothing that is Carnal or Corruptible can be the reward of Righteousness; let us therefore expect a better Countrey, even an heavenly one, let us look for the blessed Hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Christ Jesus, assuring ourselves, that when he appears, we also shall appear with him in Glory. This brings me to my third Proposition.

S. 3dly. That there is a reward for holiness in another World, and this an inexpressibly great and glorious one; this the Gospel plainly asserts, and represents it by *Life and Peace*, by *Rest and Joy*, by a *Crown and Kingdom*, (that is) by the most *desirable* and *glorious* things; and since the future happiness of a Christian depends entirely upon the will of God, since he may do what he will with his own, and we are not so much in this matter to consider the meanness of Man, as the majesty of God; no one can deny but that the declaration of the Divine Will, his repeated Promises and Assurances of this reward, must be a sufficient Foundation of our Faith; yet, because the perfection of Angels, the vision and fruition of God, and whatever else constitutes our Heaven, are things very strange and surprising, and do almost as much transcend our Comprehension, as they do our Merit: Therefore lest the wonderfulness of it should stagger our Faith, I shall lay before you such Considerations as may at once prove the certainty and the greatness of our Reward. These shall be taken, *First*, from the *Love* of God to his People. *Second-*  
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ly, from the *Sufferings and Mediation of Jesus*. Thirdly, from the state of good Men in this present Life.

*First*, From the love of God. 'Tis the property of Love to exert and express it self in all the Favours and Benefits, in all the Endearments and Engagements that it can. How glorious then must be the effects of the Love of God; whose Love must be like himself, a Passion becoming the perfection of his Nature? What may we not then expect from the Almighty Love of an Almighty God, from the Everlasting Love of an Everlasting God? Great are the things that it has perform'd already, and we have reason to believe that there are greater behind; Love made the World, Love governs it, and Love redeem'd it. Now the Love which God has for *his Children*, for his *sanctified ones*, is as much above that which he has for us as *Men*, as his *Creatures*, and the workmanship of his Hands, as the Heaven is above the Earth; may we not then from thence argue thus, if God provided such a World as this is, even for the wicked and unthankful; what less can the Righteous expect from his Favour than a Heaven? If his Providence watch over

the ungodly, and wait long for their repentance. How tender must be his Care, how unchangeable his Affection towards his Holy Ones, and what less can be the result of both than Life eternal? If God so lov'd a wicked World as to bestow his Son upon it to die for it; how, shall he not freely bestow an incorruptible Crown upon those who are made the Sons of God, and transformed into his Image, who are enlightned, cleansed, sanctified by the Blood of his Son, and the Operation of his Spirit? Is not this the reasoning of the Apostle himself, *Rom. 5. 10. For if when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more being reconciled, we shall be sav'd by his Life.* And again, *Rom. 8. 32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* And is not our Saviours Argument for the Resurrection against the Sadduces deriv'd from the same Topick. *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, now God is not the God of the Dead but of the Living, Matth. 22. 32.* which is as much as if he had said, every Man's Nature furnishes him with this



this Truth, that every one is willing to do all the good he can to those he loves. Since therefore God has declared and owned *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* for his Darlings and Favourites. we cannot imagine that rottenness and corruption shall be their portion for ever, without imputing impotence to God, and this is as repugnant to the perfection of his being, as inconstancy and forgetfulness to the perfection of his Love. The same Argument is cogent and conclusive for our eternal Kingdom : In one word, Love never rests till it compleats and consummates it self in the closest Union ; therefore says our Saviour concerning those whom he lov'd, *John 17. 24. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory.* And so the love of God hastens to take his Favourites to himself, which is one reason the wise Man assigns for the too early death of righteous Persons. *Wisd. 4.* And what will be the result of this Union ; what the Purity and Glory that qualifies us for it ; what the Blessedness that flows from it ; what Language can express ; what Imagination reach ? When I see holy *Job* upon a glimpse of the Majesty

and Holiness of God, abhorring himself in Dust and Ashes. When I see Human Nature in the Prophets, shrinking and fainting even at the Presence, but of Angelical Glory. When I read *Moses*, his Face by a little stay upon the Mount render'd so bright and radiant, that the weak Eyes of the *Israelites* cou'd not look upon it, what think I, shall I become when I shall behold not the *back parts*, but the *Glory* of the Lord: when I shall enter not into the *thick darkness*, but the inexpressible *Splendours* and *Glories* of the celestial Court. When I shall make my abode not on *Sinai*, but in *Heaven*, not for *forty days* but for *Eternity*.

*Secondly*, A second Ground on which our expectation of a Heaven is built, is the merits and sufferings of Christ. A Kingdom an heavenly one, an eternal Kingdom is indeed a glorious reward of the imperfect righteousness of a short Life, but we ought to remember too, that it is the purchase of the blood of Christ, that we owe it to the merit of his Righteousness, and receive it as the fruit of his intercession, that is, *eternal Life is the gift of God*, (as *St. Paul* expresses it) *through Jesus Christ*

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our Lord, Rom. 6. 23. conferred upon us in contemplation of all that his only begotten and well beloved Son did and suffered for Mankind. Deny this Kingdom, and the glorious designs of the Incarnation and Death of Jesus are baffled and frustrated; for neither can the *Glory* of God be vindicated, the *Redemption* of Mankind consummated, nor the *Power* and *Authority* of Jesus established without this; for as yet we are so far from seeing all things put under Christ, that Death and Sin rage and reign every where, and the Empire of Hell seems to be extended much farther than that of Christ, as yet the name of God is Blasphemed, his Law is trampled on, his Providence ridiculed, his Ordinances prophaned, and his Spirit resisted and griev'd, and at the same time all things fall alike to all, to the Righteous and to the Wicked, to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrifices not, to him that sweareth, and to him that feareth an Oath. Lastly, as yet the servants of God groan under the weight of a corruptible Body, struggle and contend with Temptations, bewail their interruptions of Religion, and complain of the defects and imperfections of their

best performances, unless therefore we will charge God with impotence and folly, unless we conclude all the Merits of Christs Incarnation, Passion and Intercession spilt upon the Ground and lost, and his whole undertaking baffled and disappointed by the wickedness of Man, and the malice and subtilty of the Devil; we must conclude that there will be another World, wherein we shall behold a very different face of things; there must be a Kingdom *wherein dwelleth Righteousness*, a day wherein God will assert his own Power, and display his Glory in his Son, to the utter Confusion of all ungodly Sinners, and to the joy and comfort of all his faithful Servants, a day finally, or rather an eternity, there must be wherein God will recompence the virtues and Sufferings, the Faith and Expectation of his People, with Peace and Rest, and glory and inconceivable Pleasure, and this is further clear,

S. 3d. From the nature and state of Religion in this World. *Christianity* in its infancy was exercised under all the Rudenesses, Indignities and Cruelties, that the prejudice and malice of the Jew, the lust and folly of the *Gentile,*



tile, the pride and scorn of the *Pagan Philosophy*, the jealousy of the secular power, the revenge and the Rage of the Devil, exasperated by the wound he had already receiv'd, and alarm'd by the fear of the total and final dissolution of his Power, cou'd heap upon it, Christianity like its great Author, travell'd in the womb, and fled in the swadling bands, and no Man cou'd be a Christian, but he was in a literal sence *to take up the Cross and follow Christ*. In one word such was the state of Christianity in those first times, that St. Paul crys out, *If in this life only we had hope in Christ, we were of all Men the most miserable!* How necessary is it then, how natural, to conclude that there is a state of Rest and Peace, of Joy and Glory, to reward the Faith and Patience, the Love and Obedience of these devout Souls. Without this it had been a poor privilege to be the favourites and followers of a Crucified *Christ*, to have been a chosen Generation, and be made by their tryals *a Spectacle of Angels and Men*; without this *Christ* had not only died in vain but to embroil the world and render mankind more miserable than it was

was before: 'Tis plain then, there is prepared for these a Crown of Righteousness, and if for them, then for us too; *for we are all Members of the same body, and heirs of the same hope.* We are all cleans'd by the same *Blood*, sanctified by the same *Word*, by the same *Spirit*. But it may be objected, their State and ours, their Tryals and ours are very different, so that it is hard to determine how their Righteousness and ours should pretend to the same Crown; to this I answer.

1. Our Case is not so different as may be thought at first sight: They were obliged to endure reproach, we are obliged to slight and despise the praise and the honour of this World; they were obliged to part with their Estates and Fortunes, we are obliged to sit loose from them; They were bound often actually to renounce the World, we are bound not to love it: And perhaps there is no great difference between actually quitting the possession of any temporal Good, and reducing and mortifying our Affections for it, while we possess it: They 'tis true were to combat Afflictions, we our Pleasures, and it is not easie to resolve which is  
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the more difficult task, to deny the one, or to endure the other.

2dly. 'Tis not easie to suppose any Man so fortunate, but that (how calm soever the publick state of Religion may be,) he will have his Cross to take up, and his Afflictions to exercise him; and there is one consideration which makes this kind of tryals more uneasie to us than those of Martyrs and Confessors to them, namely, that we do not so plainly discern the tendency of them, nor see that we suffer them directly and immediately for the sake of Christ and of a Crown.

Lastly, if the tryals of the primitive Christians were greater, so were their advantages too. The presence of *Jesus* in the Flesh, or the fresh remembrance of him, the force of Miracles, the encouragement of excellent examples, the influence of holy conversation, which was then as common as it is now rare, the effusion of the Spirit, as the interest of Christianity then required in more plentiful measures than now, a concern for the honour of Christianity, while *Jew* and *Gentile* were mingled with Christians and lay in wait to blaspheme it; these were mighty helps which  
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we enjoy not, but the first *Christians* did. All this put together, is enough to convince us that an Heaven may be inferred from the Nature and State of Religion, in all times as well as in the first, that Righteousness stands as much in need now as ever it did, of the support and incouragement of an Eternal Kingdom. The summ of all then is, how great and astonishing soever the reward of Righteousness seems to us, yet have we no reason to doubt the truth of it: Since besides the manifold and expresse assurances, we have that God will bestow upon us an Heavenly Kingdom: 'Tis plain that the love of God, the merits of *Jesus*, and the nature and fortune of Righteousness, in this Life incourage us to expect nothing less.

*The use of this discourse is two fold,*

1. Since we expect an Eternal Kingdom, we ought never to be cast down under the Evils, nor ensnared by the good things of this World. Let us often remember what that hope of Glory is, to which we are call'd; let us often think that we are the children of light, the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and let us act as becomes such. What have we to fear, to whom to die is the greatest  
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advantage? What have we to desire on Earth, who have a Kingdom in our eye; a Kingdom wherein dwells Righteousness and Peace, and Love and Glory, a Kingdom wherein you will again see your admired Mrs. adorn'd with an incorruptible Crown, and with beauties as much more taking as they will be more lasting than those which she put off with the body.

2dly. The expectation of an Eternal Kingdom should arm us with Patience and Resolution in our spiritual Warfare: *the Night is far spent, and the Day is at hand, the Night is short but the Day is Eternal.* Let us wait, Let us watch, let us stand fast a while, a little while and the Day will break in upon us, a Day that will chase away all sorrow, and fill us with Joy and Glory; a Day wherein we shall complain no more either of the infirmities of the Body, or defects of the Mind, wherein we shall grapple and fight no more either with Temptations or Evils, but shall be equal to the Angels of God, as in the perfections of Holiness, so in the per-

perfection of Pleasure too: Being made like them impeccable and incorruptible. And therefore entirely and consummately Blessed.

The

## The Eleventh Sermon.

E Z E K. xxxiii. 11.

*Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die O House of Israel?*

**I**N these and the foregoing words of this Chapter, God instructs the Prophet Ezekiel in the nature and design of his Office. If he saw the Sword coming upon the Land, that is, if he discerned by manifest Presages, divine Vengeance standing as it were at the door, and ready to break in upon them; he should then blow the Trumpet and give Warning, i. e. he should lay before them their Rebellions and Provocations, and denounce against them, the wrath and indignation of Heaven; but if they should say unto him, *our Transgressions and our Sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live,*  
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vers. 10. that is, if he found them broken and dejected under the Conscience of their guilt, and prone to despair of deliverance from those Judgments, which they were convinced were but too justly due to them; then he was to change *his* Style, and represent to them the goodness and graciousness of God, and to assure them of his readiness to pardon and receive them into favour upon Repentance; *say unto them, as I live saith the Lord God, &c.*

The doctrine of Repentance is always necessary, always seasonable, but surely never more than now, when there are so many dark and ominous tokens of impending Judgments, clear and obvious to every observer. Such are the Noise and Alarms of the execution of God's Wrath upon neighbouring Nations; our own Ingratitude and contempt of Mercies, the increase and multiplication of our Sins, our incorrigibleness and degeneracy under Chastisements, our uncurable Animosities and Divisions, the contempt of God's Ministers, and the death of such as by their Example and Authority were most likely to countenance and encourage Virtue, and give a stop to Vice. These  
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and the like are the general fore-runners of some dreadful Judgment, and cause, I doubt not, much solicitude and affliction of Soul, to such amongst us as are of tender Spirits, and impressed with a deep Sense of the Holiness and Justice of God. They seem continually to hear the bellowings and murmurings, to see the blackness and lowering of those Storms which are ready to break upon us, of those Earthquakes which are ready to open and swallow us up, and to see God, an incensed God, in the language of the Psalmist, *whetting and brandishing his Sword, bending his Bow, and preparing for us the instruments of Death.* Is not this then a day to call all to Repentance, and to exhort every one in particular, to save himself from this wicked Generation.

I will therefore from these Words, 1. Shew you briefly what that Repentance is which will not only free us from the Wrath to come, but procure us Life and Happiness. 2. I will exhort and press you to it by the two great Arguments contained in my Text, *i. e.* First, the Vengeance that will one time or other overtake the obstinate Sinner. Secondly, the readiness of God to pardon the Penitent.

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As to those two Circumstances the Solemn Oath or Asseveration of God, *as I Live saith the Lord God*, and the near Relation between God and Israel insinuated in that tender melting Expostulation, *why will ye die O house of Israel*, they add I confess much force and Edge to the Exhortation; yet I can't treat of 'em distinctly, but only as they shall fall in with some part or other of my Discourse.

1. Then, what that Repentance is, which will avert the Displeasure and procure the favour of God. This is not difficult to be resolved. The Scripture does constantly teach us, and so does Reason too, That true Repentance is a Change of Life, a Change either from Notorious Wickedness into Holiness, or *from a form of Godliness into the power thereof*, 2 Tim. 3. 5. 'Tis in the Language of the Prophet Isaiah to *cease to do evil and learn to do well*, Isai. 6. or in that of St. Paul, *To deny Ungodliness and Worldly lust, and to live Righteously, Soberly and Godly in this present World*, Tit. 2. 12. 'Tis being Sanctified throughout in Spirit, Soul and Body, 1 Thes. 5. 23. i. e. 'Tis light in the Understanding, Purity in the Affections, and in  
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*all Actions of the Body a Conformity to the will of God.* This is that Repentance which all the Descriptions of it in the Old Testament, and the New, and all the Examples of true Penitents in both recommend to us. And from hence we may infer, *First*, That the Desire of Grace, good Purposes, nay Resolutions of Amendment are not Repentance, because Men may desire what they never attain: And design and resolve, what they never perform, and accomplish. He that knows not this, must be a Stranger to Human Nature, to that State of Temptations in which we live; and to his own Folly, Frailty, and Inconstancy. *Secondly*, From this account of Repentance we may infer, that Regret and Attrition, yea Acts of Religious Fear, and Godly Sorrow, if they be not cherished and improved so as to become the Seeds of Habitual Vertue, if they be too short liv'd to produce any true and thorough Change, are not Repentance; or if they must pass for Initial Acts of Repentance (for I will not contend about words) they are not the Habit of it: They will avail us nothing in the Day of Judgment, they are good Disposi-

ons, pious Passions, Religious fits. But this is only the Goodness of Israel, which God in the Prophet complains of. *O Ephraim what shall I do unto thee, O Judah what shall I do unto thee, Hos. 6. 4. For your Goodness is as a Morning Cloud and as the Early dew, it goeth away.* And Lastly, From this account of Repentance we may safely infer, that a maim'd and Partial Change will not avail us; And if this be all they intend, who distinguish between the Moral and the Righteous Man, and assert Morality to be far short of Grace, their Language only, and not their Meaning is to be found fault with. For without Controversy, Sobriety, and Civility of Deportment, Justice and Integrity in all our Actions, if Godliness, that is, if Faith and Love, Devotion and Purity of Heart be wanting, will never justify. And the fairest Shew and Appearance of Religion, if it be without any inward Relish, Life and Zeal, will never entitle us to Heaven. But then 'tis as true on the other hand, that the highest Professions without Morality, nay even Faith and Zeal, and Devotion too, if this can be suppos'd, without Truth, Justice, Charity, and other Moral Virtues



tues are but a rude Intrusion upon God, and vain and groundless Pretensions to Religion. And now having, in few words, laid down the plain and natural Notion of Repentance, and so prevented all fatal Errors and Mistakes about it, I will pass on to the Second thing.

S. 2. And exhort you to it by those two Arguments made use of in the Text. And first of the Consequence of Sin expressed here by *Death*: By this the Scripture signifies sometimes temporal, sometimes Eternal Punishments.

1. Therefore of the temporal Punishment of Sin. The Psalmist has observed, *thereafter as a Man fears, so is thy Displeasure*. The breast that has no Faith, hath no Fear neither, for what we call Eternal Punishment: And a Reprobate and harden'd heart must be rous'd and awaken'd (if it can be at all) by another sort of Judgments than such as are invisible, and beyond the grave: For this and many other Reasons commonly alledg'd. Tho' God might very well have deferr'd the Punishment of Sin to the judgment of the last Day, he hath in Compassion to the World ever and anon testify'd his Indignation against it by some terrible judg-

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ment. For Proof of this I need not send you to view the Wracks and Ruins of the old World, the Rubbish of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, the Slaughter and Excision of the Nations of *Canaan*, and the Desolation of *Jerusalem*, *Jerusalem* the Mother of Saints and Prophets, *Jerusalem*, the Court and Residence of God ; *Jerusalem* the peculiar and Covenanted, and once the Beloved people of God. Alas ! we have more recent Instances of God's wrath against Sin, a wrath that Burns and Flames out at this Day ; when it will Slacken, and where it will Stop God alone knows ; or can any one think, when a Sparrow falls not to the ground without him, that the Dissipation, and that by a barbarous Persecution, of so many Protestant Churches ; the Sacking and Burning of so many Cities, the Devastations of so many Countreys, and I cou'd almost add, the Depopulation of Europe by a long and bloody War, with all those Numerous Plagues, which Lust and Avarice, Ambition, Rage and Revenge produce in such a Scene of Blood and Licence. Can any think I say, that all this can happen otherwise than by the Sentence of God against

gainst the Sins of *Europe* ? The Pagan Historian had more sence if not more Religion, who from the Terribleness of those miseries which harras'd the Empire under *Galba*, *Otho*, *Vitellius*, and thereabouts, infers, whether the Gods be concerned in the Preservation of our Empire or not, 'tis plain they are concerned in its Ruine, the depth of our Wounds sufficiently evincing the arm that gives them. Need I call to your Minds those dreadful Convulsions of Nature, which in *Sicily* and elsewhere have swallowed up Towns and Cities, and buried so many Thousands alive in their Ruines, and what those Earth-Quakes acted elsewhere, they threatned here. May I not now apply this Discourse to you in the words of our Saviour to the Jews! *Think ye that those whose blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifice, or those on whom the Tower of Siloe fell; think ye that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt at Jerusalem ? Luke 13. 12, &c.* think you that other Nations exceed us in their Sins as much as they do in their Sufferings ? I am sure I might tell you, Nay : I am afraid our Luxury and our Wantonness as much outvies theirs, as our Plenty ;

and our Ingratitude as our Mercies. Have not then the Messengers of God reason to add with our Saviour, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Ah! may this Denunciation never prove Prophetick, what then! what if it should not? What if this Nation alone in *Europe*, like *Goshen* in *Egypt*, should enjoy Light and Prosperity, when Plagues and Darkness infest all other Parts of it. Alas! What gain we by this; if mercy doth but multiply the Sins which Judgment would peradventure have reformed. Alas! We then but treasure up Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and escape Temporal to sink under Eternal Judgments, which is

The second and worse consequence of Sin. There is a day of Judgment, and a day of the Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God. There is, there is an Hell that burns for ever, and none can quench it; but such peradventure, as impute all temporal calamities to chance, will impute eternal ones to fancy; what God! who, is Love and Mercy, punish the short pleasures of a short Life with never dying Torments! What! our Creator and our Father punish the follies and frailties of his poor  
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Creatures and Children with an unextinguishable Hell! Far be it from him, Hell cannot be at all, or it cannot be such as it is represented. In answer to this Objection, let us first enquire what Sin is, Sin is a voluntary, a wilfull transgression of God's Law, an open defiance of his Authority, a contempt of his Anger, and of his favour of his Mercy, and his Menaces. Sin is a Disease to the Soul, and the plague and torment of Humane Life; it betrays our Reason, overthrows the Liberty and Dignity of our Minds, and defaces all the Remains of the Divine Image in us. Sin invades the Rights, disturbs the peace of our Neighbour, and subverts the Order and Beauty which wou'd otherwise appear throughout the World. Sin is a false and perfidious violation of our most solemn Vows, an ungrateful abuse of the richest Mercies. And finally, a Combination and Confederacy with Lust and Hell against the honour of God, the good of Man, and our own true and Eternal Interest. When we reflect seriously on these things we shall have no reason to wonder if Sin kindle the Wrath of God, and that Wrath kindle and prepare a Hell for the

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the Sinner. For Sin being what it is, 'tis impossible God should behold it without Indignation, unless we should suppose him as little concern'd for his own Glory and the welfare of his Creatures as the Sinner himself is. All this is intimated in my Text which represents the ways of the Sinner so evil, that they even necessitate and compel God, a gracious God, against the very bent and tendency of his Nature to inflict Death and Damnation on his Creatures.

2dly. Consider that if we be cast in the Day of Judgment, the meer reflection on that Happiness which we have slighted, which we have forfeited, will be for ever after an unsufferable Torment to us: And to find our selves not only excluded Heaven but all imaginable hopes of changing our Lost condition into a better, will be Hell enough were there no other.

Lastly, I am to put you in mind, that Hell, an Everlasting Hell, is the natural and necessary Consequence of being alienated from, and abandon'd by God; so that should that Sentence of the last Day, *Depart ye Cursed, &c.* only fix and Confirm that State to which Sin has reduc'd the unhappy Sinner,  
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that is, cast him for ever out of the Favour and Presence of God, This must be an Hell: And if Devils or Sinners raised be Immortal, an Eternal one. Whither shall he go who is driven out of the new Heaven and the new Earth, but into that outward Darknes or the bottomless pit, or Extramundane Abyss? What can he meet with there but the Rubbish and Sinders of the burnt World, and Creatures wretched as himself? What can he have to enjoy who is forsaken and exil'd by God? God is the Fountain of all Good, when he retires and draws in his Beams, nothing, but Misery can stay behind. Health and Peace, Vertue and Pleasure withdraw with him. Suppose a wretched Prodigal after he has wasted not his Substance only (like him in the *Gospel*) but his health too amongst Harlots, and being reduced to worse than want, he is forc'd to avoid the Persecution of Creditors, to flee his Country, and seek for Husks in a foreign and desolate one. Here he lives, if such a one can be said to do so, a wretch forlorn and destitute of friends, support or hopes; The fire, not of a fever, but of a Loathsome, Infamous, Disease consumes his flesh; even  
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the miserable and unfortunate shun him; and happy were he, if he could shun himself. But he cannot flee from that stench, from that Infection, from the Horror of that Spectacle from which all others do. What does this state now want to make it Hell, but the Eternity of another World? Much worse than this must be the state of the Damned, and it must be Eternal too. For all this must be the natural Consequence of being cast out for ever from the Presence of God and abandon'd by him. So that all Objections against a Hell vanish; since 'tis nothing else, but the Natural result of our Sins, *though being the Effect* too of our own Choice. God may judicially inflict what Punishments he thinks fit. He has put Life and Death before us, and if we chuse Death, God may well upbraid us in the words of the Prophet, *O Israel thy Destruction is of thy self.* I will close this Argument with the words of the Apostle Eph. 5. 6. *Let no Man deceive you with vain words for for these things sake comes the wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience.* Let not the Sophistry of Lust, let not the Customs, the vicious Customs of a corrupt World, let not the little

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flashes of Wit and Railery betray you into an Opinion, that Sin is a slight or an indifferent thing; but assure your selves, that there is so much of devilishness, so much of brutishness in it, that 'tis impossible for a Holy God ever to be reconciled to it. I think I have said enough to awaken the Sinner out of his Lethargy, to shake even Infidelity and Obstinacy, and to fill a guilty Soul with the Terror of the Lord. And then to such a one, the second motive will be very seasonable and welcome.

This is taken from the readiness of God to pardon the Penitent. This may be safely concluded from two things. 1. The infinite goodness of the Divine Nature. 2. The Declaration of the Divine Will.

1. The infinite goodness of the Divine Nature. The Gentiles as they transformed the glory of God sometimes into a Calf, so did they at other times into a Devil. Cruelty was one part of their Notion of the Deity, and then no wonder if it was a part of his Worship too; they painted him clad with Terror, and armed with Lightning and Thunder. The Priests gash'd themselves with Lancets till the Blood spouted out, and the people

people offered their Sons and Daughters in Sacrifice. But now since Revelation has dissipated Pagan darkness, since reason has been rescued from the Bondage and Thralldom of Superstition and Idolatry ; Goodness and Mercy are universally resolved to be the most natural notions of God, we sacrifice to him Purity and Love. And if we were allowed to paint him, we should draw him with Pardons in one hand and Crowns in the other, encompassed with a Glory round about, made up of innumerable Rays of Grace and Goodness, streaming incessantly down on humble Penitents. Such was the Glory of the Lord exhibited to *Moses*, *Exod. 34, &c.* And such was the Representation of him in *St. John's* Vision, *with a Rain-bow round about his Throne*, *Rev. 4. 3.* for the Rain-bow after the Deluge, *Gen. 9.* was made a token of the gracious Covenant between God and the Earth, and is a fit Emblem of that Goodness and Mercy which descends from God upon a Sinner, like the Sun-beams upon a Cloud. This notion of God is consonant to Reason ; all the Works of Creation declare the Riches of Divine Bounty, all the dispensations of Providence speak him

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Propitious and Gracious to all but the wilful and daring Sinner, and long suffering and patient, even towards him. And those seeds of Charity and Mercy, of Generosity and Goodness which he has planted in Human Nature, sufficiently instruct us what perfections enrich and adorn the Divine Mind. Nor is this notion of God less consonant to Revelation than it is to Reason; when *Moses* desired to see the Glory of God, *the Lord* passed by, and proclaimed himself *the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving Iniquities, Transgressions and Sins*; the very same is the description of the Divine Nature in all other parts of Holy Writ, as in *Micah* 7. 10. *2 Pet.* 3. 9. *1 Tim.* 2. 4. and in the words of my Text, God does not only affirm that he has no delight in the death of a Sinner, but rather that he should turn from his evil ways and live; but also for our more abundant Assurance and Consolation. He does ratifie and confirm it with an Oath, *as I live saith the Lord*. The Sum of all is this, That God desires not the Ruine, but the Reformation and Happiness of a Sinner, is a Truth founded in the Divine

vine Nature, an universal Truth extended to all Ages and all Persons. It ever was, and ever will be true till the day of Grace set, and that of Judgment break upon us. While Man is capable of Repentance, he is capable of Pardon; and while his time is prolonged, and the Gospel preach'd to him, 'tis in order to his Amendment, not further Condemnation. This cuts off all temptation to despair, in all but such who are not only wicked, but resolve to continue so, for who that will repent can despair, when he is sure that the Mercy of God is as boundless as his Majesty. But is not God Holy as well as Gracious, is he not Just as well as Merciful? And may not these Attributes as easily discourage, as the other invite the Sinner? I answer, first, That the Justice and Holyness of God ought indeed to be a Terror to the Wicked, but not to the Penitent. They behold Obstinacy with a threatening Aspect, but Repentance with a mild and propitious one. For secondly, from the holiness of God, an humble penitent may safely infer, that when he ceases to do Evil, he ceases to be the Object of God's Wrath, and when he learns to  
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do well, he becomes the Object of his Favour. Where ever God gives his Grace to sanctifie a Sinner, never will Mercy be wanting to pardon him, for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and cannot hate him that is transformed into his own Image, and made partaker of the Divine Nature. Let no Man therefore despair of Mercy, because of the Holiness and Justice of God, unless he despair of being ever able to change his Life, and quit his Sins; and no Man I think can despair of this, if he consider that God is an Holy God, for from hence we may and must infer, Thirdly, That he hath a Zeal for Holiness, and therefore will be ever ready to assist the Sincere Endeavours of a poor Sinner after Virtue, and promote his Conversion by the aid of his Spirit, which is our Saviour's own Argument, *If you being Evil, know how to give good gifts to your Children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father (i.e. your Holy Father) give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him.* And what can be insuperable to sincere and resolved Endeavours, supported and fortified by the Spirit, i.e. the power of God? 'Tis true, Death and Judgment to come,

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do often surprize the Sinner, a just Vengeance doth often cut him off amidst the vain and bold projects of a future Repentance. But what then? I never asserted that the Spirit of God would always strive with Man, or that he who being often reprov'd and hardeneth his Neck, should not suddenly fall into Destruction, and that without a Remedy. And yet I think I may here add, That God never brings final Destruction upon a Nation, nay upon a single Sinner, till he despairs of their Reformation. Hence those words of our Saviour rather wept than spoke over *Jerusalem*, Luke 19. 42. *Oh that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy Peace, but now they are hid from thine Eyes;* and since they were so, Mercy as well as Justice required the excision of that people. Since nothing else could put an end to their Crimes, but what would put an end to their being. Having thus largely insisted on the goodness of the Divine Nature, both from Reason and Revelation; I shall have the less need to say much on the second proof of God's readiness to Pardon; which is taken,

*1dly.*

2dly. From the Declaration of the Divine Will to this purpose. Whether Man under the Law of Nature were not under a natural Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace cannot be now debated. As to the Law of *Moses*, tho' in the rigour of it, it exacted unfinning Obedience, tho' the Covenant of Works promis'd Life on no other Terms; yet this was design'd only to convince us of the necessity of a Mediator, the Law not disannulling the Covenant made with *Abraham*, as *St. Paul* argues, *Gal. 3.* nor God ever actually proceeding against any by any other measures than the Equity and the Favour of the Covenant of Faith; and accordingly Grace and Pardon were published on the very Mount of *Sinai*, the Lord, the Lord merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth, keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquities Transgression and Sin, *Exod. 34. 67.* And a Provision was made for Repentance, and that such a Repentance as did expiate the highest provocations in the body of the Law. *If they shall confess their Iniquity with the Iniquity of their Fathers, with their Trespases which they have trespassed against me, and*

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that they have also walked contrary unto me, and that I also have walked contrary to them, and have brought them into the Land of their Enemies; if then their uncircumcis'd Hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their Iniquity, then will I remember my Covenant with Jacob, and also my Covenant with Isaac, and also my Covenant with Abraham will I remember, Lev. 26. 40. &c. This Doctrine in the time of the Prophets; I mean that Age which was as it were the dawning of the Gospel, was more frequently, and if it could be more fully and clearly inculcated; the business of the Prophets, as I have before shewed from the Context, being nothing else but to denounce Judgment to the Obstinate, and promise Mercy to the Penitent: If we come, lastly, to the Gospel, here we find Mercy in its Meridian Glory: This unfolds to the World the Treasures of Divine Love and Compassion, it disperses whatever Doubts and Fears the contemplation of God's Justice and Holiness would otherwise have raised, even in the Humble, in the Penitent, and the most perfect of Men; it shews us  
how



how it comes to pass through the Sacrifice of the blood of Christ, That the great Governor of the World is at Liberty to extend the Riches of his Mercy, to all but the Obstinate, without any Derogation to his Justice, or any Diminution of the Majesty of his Government, or Authority of his Laws. In one word the Gospel breaths nothing, but pardon to the Penitent: This was what the Baptist, this was what Christ himself preach'd, and this was what he gave in Commission to his Apostles; and accordingly all which they did publish both to Jew and Gentile was *Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, Act. 20. 21.* And all this in order to the Remission of Sins and Eternal Life.

But after all this notwithstanding all that has been said and done under the Old Testament and the New, to assure such as will repent of God's Readiness to pardon them: Yet in some the greatness of their Guilt, or the Artifice of Hell disorders their understanding and staggers their Faith. And 'tis not unusual to meet with such doubts and despondencies as these; I am willing to repent, I earnestly desire to do so,

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but will God be reconciled to such a Sinner as I am, will he bestow his Grace on one who has so often receiv'd it in vain, on one who has so often despis'd his word, and quenched his Spirit! will God indeed bestow his pardon on one who has so often relaps'd, so often turned his Mercy into wantonness and Presumption? To such a one I answer, *First* is it the greatness of thy Sins scare thee, there never was sure a greater than the Crucifixion of the Son of God, and yet even for that was Repentance accepted. St *Peter* charges the Jews that they had taken, and with wicked hands crucified and slain Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God amongst them by Signs and wonders, and Miracles which God did by him in the midst of them as they themselves also knew, yet when being convinc'd and wounded to the heart, they cryed out to *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles, *Men and Brethren what shall we do?* Act. 2. 23. Even to these St. *Peter* addresseth himself, in words that breath nothing but the consolations and Promises of the Gospel, *repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the Remission of Sins, and ye shall receive the*

*the Gift of the Holy Ghost.* Doth 2dly,  
The frequency and enormity of your  
Relapses affright you? Not to mention  
the notorious Lapses of the most Cele-  
brated Saints, not to mention those in-  
vitations to Repentance which God  
makes to the Churches of *Asia*, who  
had so far degenerated from their first  
Love as to become the just objects of  
God's Aversion and Indignation; The  
answer of our Lord and Master to that  
Demand of *St. Peter*, *how often shall  
my Brother Sin against me and I forgive  
him, untill Seven times? I say not unto  
thee till Seven times, but unto Seventy  
times Seven.* This answer join'd with,  
and illustrated by that other Command  
of our Lord to the same purpose, *Luke  
17. 4. If thy Brother trespass against  
thee Seven times in a Day, and seven  
times in a Day turn again to thee, saying  
I repent, thou shalt forgive,* is sufficient  
to relieve the despair of the most Profligate  
Deserter or Backslider; for he  
doth plainly enjoin us to repeat our  
pardons as often as our Brother doth  
his Sins, at least-wise if he repeats his  
Repentances too. And will God be  
outveigh'd by Man in the Perfections  
of Mercy and Goodness?

But it is possible some one or other may object, I can indeed easily believe that God will pardon such as will sincerely repent, but I am a Reprobate and a Cast away, to whom God never will vouchsafe his Grace : And I am so fast bound in the Chains of habitual and customary Sins, that I find I Struggle but in vain. To this I answer, *first*, Presumption, and a long obstinacy in Sin doth indeed render Repentance extremely difficult, but that it renders it utterly impossible ; can I believe never be proved, either by Reason or Scripture. There is no change which God's Grace and our Resolution cannot break : there is no Natural or contracted Impotence which the Grace of God is not sufficient to relieve, and that this Grace should be utterly denied to Importunate Prayer : Or that sincere and persevering Endeavours of a Christian, should be frustrated for want purely of Divine assistance seems to me altogether inconsistent with the nature of God, and the Promises of the Gospel. The Day of life and strength is the Day of Grace ; where God gives time, 'tis to Repent, not Sin. And the calls of the Gospel, whatever they may in  
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Event prove ; are not designed to Increase the Guilt, but reform the Crimes of Sinners. I know a State of Judicial Obduration in which an irreversible Sentence of God binds up the Sinner like Devils in Chains of Darkness to the Judgment of the last Day, is asserted by some, and insinuated in the Objection. But to obviate whatever Discouragements may arise from this opinion, I answer, *First*, If we consider fact in Scripture the Sentence of Excision and inflexible Obduration, if there be any such, are wont to be past at the same time, and therefore none who are called and invited to repent, and have space given them for it can conclude themselves cast off by God, or under the fetters of the Sentence of Obduration. *Secondly*, Those several Texts of Scripture seem at first blush to make for such a State, yet I suspect that when they are examined to the bottom they will be found to mean no such thing. For of those which seem to speak an Impossibility of Repentance, and Pardon some relate not to the Repentance of the Sinner himself, but that Intercession may not avail, where Repentance will. Thus is the Sin unto Death  
to

to be accounted for in St. *John*, others regard not Eternal, but temporal Punishments: And thus that difficult place, *Act. 8. Repent, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee*, must be explained. Some assert that there is no other Baptism, no other Sacrifice besides that of Christ, and therefore pronounce the Apostate incapable of Salvation; and this Sentence had regard to a peculiar Circumstance of those first times, namely, a Divine Vengeance was just ready to overwhelm the Infidel Jew and Apostatiz'd Christian, which cut off all Opportunities of Repentance: This is the sense of those places in the Epistle to the *Hebrews* which do so often perplex such as relapse. *Lastly*, many Texts are to be understood of a Moral Impossibility only, not such a one as results from any Irreversible Decree of God. And it deserves to be further discussed than hitherto it has been, whether the Sin against the Holy Ghost be not *Absolutely* but *Comparatively* only pronounced unpardonable, that is, that it cannot be pardoned in the same manner, and upon the same ground with

with the sin against the Son of Man. For that several who once blasphem'd the Spirit did afterwards repent and were pardoned is Matter of fact, so Notorious that it has moved some to resolve that this Sin could not be committed till after that illustrious Effusion of the Spirit in Pentecost. But how Consonant this Perswasion is to what our Saviour has delivered about this Sin in the Gospel, I'll not determine. But after, all whether a State of fatal Obduration during the day of Life and Health may be from Scripture concluded or not, I answer 2<sup>dly</sup>, that the Objector is not concerned in the Decision of this Controversy, for Complaints and self-Accusation, Trouble and Perplexity of Mind about one's Spiritual Condition are inconsistent with a Reprobate state. for *τὸς ἀδοκίμους*, a Reprobate Mind imports one that hath sinned himself past all sense of Sin, who hath lost all sense of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong; and commits Sin with Greediness and Confidence: Whence such a one is described to be past feeling, and to have a fear'd Conscience, a Character which can never belong to the sinner who is disturbed and troubled at his State, who desires

desires and prays, strives and struggles to get free. It remains then that God is always ready to pardon the Penitent whatever his Sin be: That Mercy knows no other Bounds but this one. It gives place to Justice when Man is incapable of reaping any good from the Long Suffering and Patience of God. I should now say something of the Fruit or Effect of Divine Mercy, namely, Life. But I have only time to say, 'Tis such a Life that when we enter into it, if ever we look back on this we shall stand amazed at the Madnes and stupidity of our Coldness and Indifference for it; and blush at the Folly and Impertinence as well as the Ingratitude of all our sinful Passions. 'Tis very obvious what the Influence of this whole Discourse ought to be. I have in the first place laid before you the true Notion of Repentance: I hope this will awaken some of you, and make you more Solicitous and Jealous of your Repentance lest you take up with a form of Godliness instead of the power of it, with Civility, Honour or good Nature, instead of Illumination and Purity of heart. Or finally with good Designs, or Pious fits, and Short liv'd Heats and Sallies, instead of a thorough

Change,



Change, and an Habitual Righteousness. I have in the next place laid before you the Terroures and the Mercies of the Lord. And methinks I might reasonably expect that they should Operate upon you: That there should be no Soul so Obdurate as to resist both the Wrath and the Goodness of God: Oh me thinks every one that hears me should by this time be forming such Vows and Resolutions as these. O my God I am at length sensible of thy Goodness and my Baseness! I see what Judgments what an Hell my Sins deserve! and yet what Blessedness what an Heaven thou in thy boundless Mercy art ready to bestow upon me; ah! My God, I am sorry, my Soul bleeds within me to think that I have so long withstood thee, that I have so long provoked thee. Ah! if thou wilt now accept of such an ungrateful Wretch as I am: If thou wilt now accept of the Miserable Remains and Shipwracks of a Mis-spent Life, I here Solemnly devote and dedicate my self, my time to thee; I will Love thee, I will serve thee, I will delight in thee; Adieu my vain and foolish Desires, Adieu my shameful Lusts, my empty and deceitful Pleasures, My Sloth, My Pride, My Vanity;

Vanity; My Soul is fired with an Ambition for Heaven, Prayers and Tears, Alms, and good Works, gracious Conversation and the Contemplation of Divine truth, the Pleasures of a free and enlightned Mind, the Joy of God's Presence, the Consolation of his Spirit; these shall be the business, these shall be the Diversions, these shall be the Projects and Pleasures of my Life, assist me, O my God, a poor wretched, frail Creature, that I may make good my Vows, and pass the time of my sojourning here in fear as always in thy Presence, till I come to that State of Triumph, Peace and Glory, where I shall watch and fight no more.

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## The Twelfth Sermon.

PSALM xxxiv. 2.

*My Soul shall make her boast in the Lord.*

**M**AN is too often more sensible of evil than Good, and more apt to murmur and complain of the one, than to bless and praise God for the other; nay what is worse, Those good things which should inspire us with love and gratitude, and engage us to the service of God, have very often a quite contrary influence upon us: They render us more forgetful of God, and unthankful to him, ~~that~~ they <sup>fasten</sup> our affections more strongly on the World, and instead of humility and dependance on God, produce in us pride and insolence, vain glory and confidence in our selves and Fortunes. To prevent or cure this Sin, this crying Wickedness, this bold contradiction to all true notions of God and our selves, of his Providence, and our State, I have made choice of these

these Words, from whence I might recommend to you, a duty than which nothing can better become us in whatever capacity we be considered. What can better become us who are the Creatures of God, than to bless him, and depend on him? What can better become us as Christians than to be always Praising and Magnifying that God, to whose grace we owe our Salvation and Happiness? *It becometh well the just to be thankful.* If Lastly we consider our selves as members of *this* Church or State, God appears to have distinguisht us by peculiar and signal Mercies and Blessings, and therefore we ought to distinguish our selves too by being peculiarly eminent, for our gratitude and reliance on God, we above all People ought to put in practice the resolution of the Psalmist, because we lie under more and greater Obligations to it than any others. *My Soul shall make her Boast in the Lord.*

Boasting in the Lord is not one single one, but a kind of complication of virtues, 'tis love and gratitude to God, in opposition to forgetfulness and unthankfulness; 'tis humility towards him, in opposition to Pride and Self-conceit; 'tis acquiescence in reliance, and dependence



dance upon him, in opposition to vanity and confidence in our selves and fortunes. This is the duty which the Text recommends, and which therefore I shall press upon you by these four or five arguments.

1. The example of excellent persons.

2. We have received all from God.

3. We are in such a State of dependence upon him that we can reap little benefit. Nay, we may suffer much prejudice by the most excellent endowments and possessions; unless they be sanctified by his grace, and befriended by his Providence.

4. The boasting in any thing but in him is a symptom of extream profaneness and irreligion; and therefore,

5ly. God is a profest Enemy to all such proud and vain boasters. I'll begin with the first of these.

1. The example, &c. This duty of boasting in God, and nothing else, is what the Scripture does frequently and earnestly inculcate, and extends to all those things which mankind is wont to acquiesce, confide and Glory in: thus, Jer. 9. 23, 24. *Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise Man glory in his Wisdom, neither let the mighty Man glory in his Might: Let not the Rich Man glory in his Riches, but let him*

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that Glorieth Glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciseth loving kindness, Judgment and Righteousness in the Earth: For in these things I delight saith the Lord: To this probably St. Paul refers, when putting the Corinthians in mind, out of what mean, despicable, ignorant, sinful and wretched State, God had translated them into the Kingdom of his dear Son, he concludes with this Inference, that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption; that according as it is written, He that Glorieth let him Glory in the Lord. 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. And St. Paul himself was an eminent Example of his own Doctrine, for when to vindicate himself from that contempt, which false Apostles indeavour'd to cast upon him, he found himself obliged to recount what he had done and suffered, in the cause of Christianity, together with his Endowments, Graces and privileges, in all which he was not inferiour to the Chiefest of Apostles; he begs pardon for it, calls it the Foolishness of boasting, and as if nothing

nothing less could excuse it, he pleads necessity for it. *For I have compelled me.* So strong a tincture of carnal vanity did bottling seem to have in it, the very appearance of which created as it were a blush and scruple in this humblest and greatest of the Apostles, and yet it did but seem so, for the true Cause of this just and necessary commendation of himself, was not any Worldly tenderness for his own Reputation, but a jealousy for the Honour of God, and the Interest of Souls; he was afraid lest his Office might suffer in his Person, and that contempt which was thrown upon the one might hinder the success of the other; this is clear from 1 Cor. 11. 20. But this Apostle who was thus shy of glorying in his Excellencies and advantages, least he should seem too tender of his own honour, how forward is he to record his infirmities, that he might advance God's? 2 Cor. 12. 9. *Most gladly therefore, will I rather Glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* He willingly lets us know that he was a blasphemer, and a persecuter, that at the same time he might let us know the Riches of Divine Mercy, in his pardon, and Apo-

poſſeſſhip; he willingly confeſſes his proneneſs to be puſt up by Knowledge and Revelation; his contention with the thorn in the Fleſh; that he might from hence take an occaſion to magnifie the power of God's grace, he every where owns his weakneſs, confeſſeth himſelf an earthen veſſel, that the glory of all his conqueſts and atchievements might redound to God, from whom he derived whatever Strength or Treasures he poſſeſſed.

To *St. Paul* I will joyn *David*; for as the one was the moſt eminent ſervant of God under the New Teſtament, ſo was the other under the Old, which ought to add great force and weight to their examples. I have conſidered the humility and gratitude of the one, in reference to ſpiritual things, and now I will ſet before you that of the other, in reference to temporal ones. The praiſe of God for ſome Mercy or Bleſſing or other, is the ſubject of almoſt every *Pſalm*; one while he magnifies God for his goodneſs in general, and another while for that to himſelf in particular; and ſometimes he mixes both together; as in this *34th Pſalm v. 4.* he celebrates his own deliverance. *I ſought the Lord*  
and



and he heard me, yea, he delivered me  
out of all my fear. v. 8 9. He sets forth  
his goodness toward all that serve him.  
O taste and see how gracious the Lord is.  
Blessed is the Man that trusteth in him.  
O fear the Lord ye that are his Saints :  
for they that fear him lack nothing. It  
were endless to pursue instances of this  
kind through the *Psalms*, I will content  
my self with one place full enough for  
my purpose, 'tis *Psalm*. 44. in v. 8.  
he has these words, *In God we boast all  
the Day long, and praise thy Name for ever.*  
These words describe the Influence of  
Success and Prosperity upon David,  
or rather they are the result of his re-  
flections upon the glorious progress of  
*Israel's* arms, against the *Canaanites*.  
Tracing all back to the first cause, and  
finding that the extraordinary Issue of  
that War was not owing to the conduct  
of *Moses*, and *Joshua*, or to the number  
and courage of the Armies of *Israel* ;  
but to the protection, and favour of  
God, he easily from thence inferred,  
*That it was in him alone they ought all times  
to confide ; That he is their strength and  
Salvation; and therefore ought to be their  
Glory, and their Joy, their praise and  
their hope ; they got not the Land in pos-*  
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session by their own Sword, nor was it their own Arm that helped them, but it was his right hand, and the might of thine Arm, and the Light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. In all this therefore he could discern no temptation to Pride and Elation of Mind, to confidence and security, to Insolence and Vanity, but plain and invincible Reasons of humility and dependance upon God, of Thanksgiving and Praises to him; and accordingly he resolves, *In God will we boast all the Day long, and Praise thy Name for ever.* Thus did the Psalmist and the Apostle serve God in all humility of mind, and thus must we serve him too; we cannot be Christians unless God be all in all to us, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end, unless we look upon him, as the Source and Spring of all good, the object of our joy and glory, and the ultimate end of our desires and hopes.

2. My next motive to boasting in God and in him alone is this. That we have received all from him, 'tis a great truth, *that every good gift comes down from above*, whether they be natural endowments, or Worldly possessions all is from God; all that we are born

born to, and all that we acquire, Judgment, Courage, Wit, Eloquence, Wealth, Power, Favour, and the like, all these we certainly owe to God. As to the gifts of nature none, unless atheistical, can doubt; and as to all others of what sort soever, Reason will easily teach us, that the Sovereignty and Dominion of God, extends as far as his Creation, and what his power produces, his Wisdom and Goodness must and does dispose of. We shall be much confirmed in this opinion, if we consider that those attainments, and acquisitions, which seem with the best colour to be attributed to our selves, depend upon so many things which God has placed without our Power, and reserved to his own, that we must be forced to confess that Man's good Success, even in these, is owing especially to the favour and concurrence of God. Thus what is there that Man can with better right ascribe to his Study, and Experience, to application of mind and diligence, than Learning and Prudence? And yet it is so notorious, that these depend upon several capacities of nature, and various circumstances of Fortune, and Education; and these again upon God,

that we cannot give the Glory of these to Man without being guilty of Sacrilege towards God. Hence it is that after *Solomon* has commanded us to seek for Wisdom, as Silver, and search for her as hid Treasure, he adds this as a motive and encouragement to it, *for the Lord giveth Wisdom; out of his mouth cometh Knowledge and Understanding*, Prov. 2. 6. So amicably do divine Providence, and human industry agree together. How natural does it seem to assign Victory to Courage and Conduct, and yet he who excludes Providence here, must be injurious to God, and partial to Man, for not to examine how far Courage and Conduct are owing to God, he must be a very heedless Reader of History, who has not remarked, that the event of War depends upon a Thousand circumstances, and casualties intirely in the disposal of God, whence nothing is more common than that the wise and daring miscarry; While success waits upon Men of a very different character, not to multiply instances, that beloved Wealth which is the incitement and reward of human Art, Skill and Industry is, after all, the largess of Divine Bounty, Wind and Weather,



Weather, the countenance and favour of Man, with a Thousand other accidents are necessary to acquire it, and to preserve it, a wakefull providence which must guard it against a Thousand casualties, to which it is hourly liable, hence now it is that as the Scripture tells us, it is God who giveth Victory in Battle. So it tells us also it is God who giveth Man power to get Wealth, Deut. 8. 18. What is now the inference from all this; even that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 4. 7. For who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it. It is arrogance and Pride, to assume to our selves, what we owe to the Goodness of God: We ought to think and say of all we have, as Jacob did to Esau, of his Children and Flocks. *These are the Children which the Lord hath graciously given me, and again the Lord hath dealt graciously with me, and I have enough,* Gen. 23. 11. And if we derive all from God, acknowledgment and praise is the least Sacrifice we can make him; as every good thing flows from his Bounty, and every prosperous  
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Man is the creature of his favour, so should every thing speak and reflect his Honour.

But may not a man who is enriched above others with the gifts of Heaven, value himself above the rest of Mankind who seem comparatively neglected and overlooked? Yes, for a Man to look on himself as a favourite of God, is to acknowledge himself to eat the Bread, to live and flourish by the bounty, and grace of God, his Prince and Sovereign; and to do this, is not to boast in himself but in God; but if a Man presume upon those excellencies which indeed he hath not, and boast the Favours which he hath not receiv'd, this is Arrogance and Vanity; but if any Man mistakes and perverts the designs of God's Favours, if he imploy his Power and Wealth, or any other gift to support his Luxury and Insolence, like the evil Steward in the Gospel, *who eat and drank with the drunken, and smote and beat his fellow-servants*; this is indeed Ingratitude with a Vengeance; for it is to forget that he hath a Lord over him, to forget that his Talents are Trusts and Gifts for which he stands accountable, and to look upon them so much his own, as if he had a right  
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to waste and squander them at pleasure, which is boasting in himself, and possessions in the very worst of Senses, which must bring upon him a thousand Mischiefs in this and the World to come; a thought which minds me of my third Reason.

3dly. We depend so entirely upon God, that we can reap little benefit; nay, we may suffer much prejudice by the most excellent endowments and possessions, unless they be sanctified by his Grace, and befriended by his Providence. This is a natural consequence flowing from the former head, but if it need any further proof, there cannot be a clearer than an Appeal to plain matter of fact. How true is that observation of Solomon, Eccles. 9. 11. *I returned, and saw under the Sun, that the Race was not to the swift, nor the Battel to the strong, neither yet Bread to the wise, nor yet Riches to Men of understanding, nor yet Favour to Men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all; so weak and prosperous are the most admired perfections of Man, when deserted or crossed by Heaven. Gideon might have continued in the threshing floor to old age, notwithstanding*

standing his martial disposition had, not the Angel roused him with that gracious Salutation, *The Lord is with thee, thou mighty Man of Valour.* David himself, though he had all in him that was necessary to make a great Man, all that could please or profit Mankind, all that could render him either revered or gracious, had probably been confined to his Crook and Sling, to his Sheep and the Wilderness, had not Providence marked out the way to his Exaltation, had not God found him out an unexpected patron to introduce him into Court, and make his Prince acquainted with his incomparable qualities; *Behold, I have seen a Son of Jesse the Bethlemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant Man, and a Man of War, and prudent in matters, and a comely Person, and the Lord is with him, 1 Samuel 16. 18.*

But this is not all the richest gifts, if not befriended by Providence and sanctified by Grace, do not only smother away obscurely and ingloriously, but often prove fatal and destructive, both to their owners and others; how easily doth Sagacity degenerate into Fraud and Subtilty, Wit into Prophaneness and Atheism?



Atheism? Courage into brutal fierceness and barbarity? How naturally do Riches breed Luxury? Power Tyranny? Honour Insolence? Favour and Applause Vanity? What were the fruits of *Achitophel's* profound Politicks and subtle Counsels when blasted by God, but an untimely and shameful Death? What did the Courage and Magnanimity of *Saul*, when deserted of God? Or of *Jonathan*, when involved in the fate of his Father, but procure them an honourable Death on the Mountains of *Gilboa*? When Ambition and Disloyalty had infected the Duty and Piety of *Absalom*, those Charms which made him popular, made him miserable too; the beauty of his Person, and the enchantment of his Tongue, the artfulness and insinuation of his Address, did all but draw on his Sin and Ruine. Nay, the very Spirit of Prophecy did but hasten the ruine of *Balaam*, and inhance the guilt of *Caiphas*, when Covetousness had rooted it self in the one, and Ambition in the other; and if these gifts prove injurious without the conjunction and patronage of Grace and Providence; how much more must those of an inferiour and meaner nature?

ture. Thus the wise Man observes of Riches, not only what a Vanity, but a Vexation they prove, when either Ambition or Covetousness blasts, or obstructs the enjoyment of 'em. *Ecclesi. 5. 13.* *There is a sore Evil which I have seen under the Sun, namely, Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.* In this he remarks concerning such who acted by a senseless Ambition, resolved by any ways to raise themselves and posterity, and then demonstrates the folly and wretchedness of such in two or three Instances. *First, all his days he eats in darkness;* that is reservedness, anxiety, fullness, melancholy, and fear are his inseparable Companions in the dark and crooked paths of Life, and he is a stranger to the Candour, Freedom, Cheerfulness and Security of the honest and upright Man. *Secondly, he hath much Sorrow and Wrath with his Sickness;* that is when a Calamity or Disease overtakes him, his Conscience rages and raves within him, and all the mean and base Actions of a miserable Life, set themselves in array against him. *Thirdly, those Riches perish by evil Travel,* that is, his Ambition defeats its self, and the painful and toilsome wickedness which

first rais'd him to Wealth and Honour, doth in the end overwhelm him with Shame and Poverty, the Judgments of God, and the revenge of Man pursuing and hunting him down. Lastly, he begetteth a Son, and there is nothing in his Hand; this is the Sum Total of his Grandure, this is the issue of his ambitious Projects. The wise Mans Reflection on that Wealth which the covetousness of the possessor, like Worms in the Manna, which was gathered only to be laid up, corrupts and depreciates, is not much milder, Eccles. 6. 1, 2. there is an Evil which I have seen under the Sun, and it is common among Men: A Man to whom God hath given Riches, Wealth and Honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his Soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a Stranger eateth it; this is Vanity, and it is an evil Disease. I will add but one Instance more; Power, as it is a more splendid and valuable Gift than Wealth, so is it obnoxious to greater Evils; how often does that Power which ought to protect and guard Mankind, and support human Society, serve only to harraiss and destroy the one, and to disorder and dissolve the other;

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Power in the hand of the proud Sinner, is like a Sword in the hand of a Fool or Mad-man, pernicious to all, but most to himself; what an Example have we of this in the favourite of a mighty Prince? I mean *Haman*, we find this Man, *Esther* 5. proudly displaying his Plumes, recounting to his Friends and Dependants, the Glory of his Riches, the number of his Children, the Honours and Preferments which his Prince had heaped upon him, the particular Grace the Queen had shewed him; and after all, this swelling and pompous harangue shrank into that poor pitiful and miserable Conclusion, *and yet all this profiteth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting in the King's Gate*; thus Envy, like the Worm that smote *Jonah's* Gourd, blisted the freshness and verdure of all his Glory; but alas! this was but a petty mischief. This leaven never left working, till it had prevailed upon him, to imploy all his Power and Interest, not only to the destruction of *Mordecai*, this was too cheap a Sacrifice to his Pride, Envy and Revenge, but of the whole Nation of the *Jews*; and this drew on the black Catastrophe of his Fortunes, for to use  
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the words of the Psalmist; *In the Net which he privately laid for another, was his own Foot taken, and his mischievous devices lit upon his own Head*; from all this it abundantly appears why we should glory in God, not in any thing else, since without his Grace and Providence, the most valuable gifts of Nature or Fortune as we speak are but useless and unprofitable Trifles, or what is much worse, splendid and glorious Mischiefs; he that bestows his Gifts must bless them too, or else we shall reap little from em, he must impregnate, influence, direct those capacities with which he hath indowed us, or else they will soon be mis-employed to his dishonour, and to our Torment and Ruine. Ah! what vain Confidence then is that which tempts us to forget or renounce our dependance upon him? what stupidity and folly is it that makes us glory in any worldly Possession, or in our Selves? Alas! there is no Strength or Wisdom in our Hands, nor is there help, security or pleasure in any Creature without God; but this is not only a great folly, but a great Sin; which is my fourth Reason.

*Fourthly*, To boast in any thing but God, is a symptom of extream prophaneness and irreligion, for whence can this proceed but from an understanding darkened by Ignorance or Infidelity, or from a Heart alienated from God, and possessed by some vile Idol; for whatever Man sets his Heart upon, whatever he glories and confides in; this is his supreme good, this is his God. To refer the advantages and enjoyments of this life to any thing but God, to ascribe the Issues and Events of human Actions and Affairs, to any thing but him, to rest and glory in these temporal things, and in the survey of worldly Grandure and Felicity, to enquire after no cause or origin of it at all, or to pursue our enquiries no further than the Power or Prudence, Courage or Industry of Man, or what is worse, mere Chance and Fortune, what is this, but to exclude God out of the World, to deface the most natural and universal notion of a Deity; namely, That he is the Author of all good, and consequently to leave no firm Foundation, either for our Love of him, or Trust and Hope in him; what Absurdity, what Ingratitude is this, God by displaying his divine perfections in

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him,

him, and as much as in us lies, to depose and dethrone him, and if boasting in any thing beside God, include in it all this wickedness and guilt, it is no wonder if God be a professed Enemy to all such proud boasting; which is  
 My fifth and last Argument. The Heathen thought that there was an envious Dæmon, whose peculiar province it was to cast down the vain glorious and insolent; but we Christians are taught, that to humble the proud is a work that God delights in. God, saith St. James, resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the humble. The day of the Lord, saith the Prophet Isaiah 2. 12. shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty; and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low, and upon all the Cedars of Libanon that are high and lifted up; and upon all the Oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high Mountains, and upon all the Hills that are lifted up, &c. and the loftiness of Man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of Men shall be made low; and wherefore doth God take pleasure in this, far be envy from him, a passion incident only to the mean and miserable. No, 'tis to assert his Sovereignty and Dominion, to im-  
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print an awe of his power upon the  
minds of Mankind, and to extort from  
the Proud and vainglorious mortals, a  
confession of their Minutness and his  
Majesty, hence Isaiah, and the Lord alone,  
shall be exalted in that Day. And Daniel  
To the intent that the living may know,  
that the most high dwelleth in the  
Kingdoms of the Earth, and giveth them  
to whomsoever he will. And Antiochus  
2 Macc. 9. when he was not able to bear  
his own stink, ended his Pride and va-  
nity, in these wise and humble Words:  
It is meet to be subject to God, and that  
Man that is Mortal, should not think of  
himself as if he were God. To leave this  
argument the more deeply Ingraven in  
your hearts, I will lay before you three  
remarkable examples of Gods In-  
dignation against proud boasting and  
self-confidence, namely, Nebucadnezzar,  
Antiochus Epiphanes, and Herod. Ne-  
bucadnezzar was that Tree in his Vision,  
Dan. 4. 8, 9, 10, &c. Whose height reached  
Heaven, and its branches the Ends of the  
Earth, the leaves thereof were fair, and  
the Fruit thereof much, and in it was  
Meat for all: the Beast of the field had  
Shadow under it, and the Fowls of the  
Heaven dwell in the boughs thereof, and

all Flesh was ~~scared~~ from But how soon  
 did pride blast all this glory and self-  
 confidence provoke the exterminating  
 decree. ~~Then down he~~ ~~Then~~ ~~he~~ ~~cut~~  
~~off his Branches,~~ ~~shake off his leaves and~~  
~~scatter his Fruits.~~ ~~Let the Beast~~ ~~get~~  
~~away from under it,~~ ~~and the Fowls~~ ~~from~~  
~~his branches.~~ The poor Creature struck  
 with horror, by this menace, seems to  
 awake out of his vain dream, and to  
 recover something of his lost Sobriety  
 and Sense, and he seems to me to have  
 followed for a while, the advice of *Dae-  
 niel*, for his prosperity was lengthned  
 for a Year, but at the Years end, so  
 Silly and Unstable, Ungratefull and  
 Faithless is every proud Man, relapsing  
 again into his former disease, he broke  
 out into this proud boast, Is not this  
 great Babylon that I have built for the  
 House of the Kingdom, by the might of  
 my power, and for the Honour of my Ma-  
 jesty? While the word was in the Kings  
 mouth, there fell a voice from Heaven,  
 saying, O King Nebucadnezzar unto thee it  
 is spoken, the Kingdom is departed from  
 thee, and they shall drive thee from a-  
 mong Men, and thy dwelling shall be with  
 the Beast of the Field. I cannot repre-  
 sent the arrogance and Punishment of

*Antio.*

*Antiochus* in a more Emphatical manner, than the Author of *Maccabees* has done it, *12 Macc. 9*. He spoke proudly, and said he would come to *Jerusalem*, and make it a common burying place of the *Jews*, but the Lord Almighty, the God of *Israel*, smote him with an incurable and invisible Plague, for as soon as he had spoken these words, a pain of the bowels that was remediless came upon him, and sore torments of the inner parts; howbeit he nothing at all ceased from his bragging, but still was filled with Pride, breathing out fire in his rage against the *Jews*; but it came to pass that he fell down from his Chariot, carryed violently, so that having a sore fall, all the members of his Body were much pained, and thus he that a little afore thought he might command the waves of the Sea, (so proud was he beyond the condition of Man) and weigh the high mountains in a balance, was now cast on the ground, and carried in a horse litter, shewing forth unto all, the manifest power of God, so that the Worms rose out of the Body of this Wicked Man, and while he lived in sorrow and pain, his Flesh fell away and the filthiness of his

smell was noysome to all his Army and the Man that thought a little before he could reach the Stars of Heaven, no Man could induce to carry for his intolerable stink. I will conclude these instances with that of Herod, Acts 12. 21. 23. 24. And upon a set Day Herod arrayed in Royal apparel, sat upon his Throne and made an oration unto them, and the People gave a shout, saying, it is the voice of a God, and not of a Man, and immediately the Angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory, and he was eaten of Worms, and gave up the Ghost. Behold the Vanity of Man, the indignation and power of God! How easy is it for him to change the Throne into a Death Bed? Royal robes into Worms? Flattery and Acclamation into Tears, or Scorn? And the Pride and Insolence of Man, into Poorness and dejection of Spirit? Since God is wont to do so, or something like it, in proportion to the pride, and the Station of Man, we cannot but conclude, that modesty is man's Wisdom, as well as duty, humility the security as well as ornament of his Fortune, and gratitude to God, the only effectual way to encrease and prolong his Felicity. Thus have



have I said before you several considerations, serving to enforce the duty in my Text, *z. c.* our boasting in God and in him alone, and I doubt not but as I have convinced you of our obligation to this duty, so you will be ready to tell me, that you do in some measure comply with it, for this is one common way, by which the Force of all Practical Discourses is wont to be eluded. To prevent this here, I will set down by way of Conclusion or Application, two or three marks or characters by which we may examine our selves in reference to this matter.

1. If we have grateful hearts towards God, which is Essential to the Duty of my Text, we shall let slip no occasion which invites us to Praise and Honour him, nor only those things that are New and surprising, that are unusual or extraordinary, but also the common and ordinary Works of God, and his constant and Dayly benefits will affect our hearts, with a Devout and thankful remembrance of him, no instance of Providence, no accidents of Life will pass us, without making some reflection upon it, tending to magnifie the Wisdom, Power or Goodness of God.

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His Works, his Mercies, his Favours, his Glorious perfections, will ever be in our hearts, and his Praise will ever be in our mouths. Business, Diversion, Labour, Ease, Success, Disappointment will not be able to hinder the one, nor any regard for the censure of Man the other, all this I collect from the example of David, *Psalm 71*. *I will always give thanks unto the Lord, his praise shall ever be in my Mouth. In God we boast all the Day long, and Praise his Name forever.* *Psalm 119*. *18. When I awake I am still with thee.* *Psalm 77*. *11, 12. I will remember the works of the Lord. Surely I will remember thy Wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy Works, and talk of thy doings.*

*Psalm 124*. *If we truly glory in the Lord, and in nothing else, our admiration and reverence, our love and gratitude will discover themselves, not only in our Words, but in our Actions, that holy disposition and frame of mind, which moves us to boast in God alone, will have an influence upon the whole course of our Lives. The principle which causes us to be humble and thankful towards God, will keep us from being disrespectful and insolent towards Man; and*

and in general, we shall think it our duty not only to glorifie God by Praise and Thanksgiving, but also, and that especially, by a right use and employment of his Benefits and Mercies. To reduce this to particulars, we boast not in our success, but in God, when we ascribe it to his Providence, not to the Counsels, Courage or Conduct of Man, when we treat vanquished or unfortunate Enemies with all the modesty and moderation that becomes a just sense of the vickitude and uncertainty of human Affairs, and all the Charity that becomes our Christianity, that is the utmost that can consist with the publick Honour and Safety. We boast not in Riches, but in God, when as the Apostle writes us, *1 Tim. 6. 17. We are not high minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy,* and when we so enjoy as to be rich in good works too, and make our wealth the instrument of Charity not Luxury, we boast not in Power but in God, when we always remember we are but Men, and that he is God, when we exert it not to subvert Justice, but uphold it, not to grieve or oppress, but protect and relieve our Neighbour. Finally, we  
boast

boast not in our Wisdom but in God when we lean not to our own understanding but on him, when it does not puff us up, but increase the purity and integrity of our Minds; when lastly, it does not tempt us to insult the weakness, or prey upon the fortunes of a Brother, but render us more serviceable to God and Man.

3. The practice of this Duty does by degrees advance us to a settled state of Pleasure; I add, by degrees, to prevent any mistake about this matter. Love and Gratitude are not presently rais'd to a height, nor does Hope in God grow up to strength in a moment, both which are necessary ingredients of the pleasure I speak of; what can be more delightful than the exercise of Love, when the object of it is most perfect, what can be more agreeable than holy Joy and Praise excited by a lively sense of divine Favour? What can be a truer or more lasting satisfaction than Communion with God, and a firm though humble Confidence in him? The *Psalmist* had undoubtedly an experimental knowledge of this truth; may we all come to have such a one too, that we may be able to say feelingly with him, *Psalm 63. 3, 4, 5, 6. because thy loving kind-*



kindness is better than Life: my lips  
shall praise thee: thou wilt bless thee  
while I live: I will lift up my hands in  
thy Name, my soul shall be satisfied as  
with Marrow and Fatness: and my Mouth  
shall praise thee with joyful Lips: when I  
remember thee upon my Bed, and meditate  
on thee in the Night watches.

The practice of this Duty does by  
degrees advance us to a settled state of  
pleasure: I add, by degrees, to prevent  
any mistake about this matter. Love  
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